

1st Samuel Chapter 20 – John Karmelich

1. If I had to describe this chapter in one word, it would be “test”.
 - a) Chapter 20 is mostly about David testing Jonathan to see if he is more loyal to him than to his father Saul. To summarize, Jonathan passes the test with flying colors.
 - b) In Chapter 18, Jonathan stated his loyalty to David over his father.
 - i) In chapter 20, David tests that statement. David asks Jonathan to perform a series of tests to prove his loyalty to him over his father.
 - ii) It is almost as if David is saying, “OK Jonathan, you made that oath some time back. It is time to put your money where your mouth is”.
 - c) A common trait among the heroes of the bible is they get tested. The main reason is that God wants us to grow in our relationship with Him. To mature means to be more and more dependant upon God and not our own resources. In order for us to grow, we need to be tested.
 - i) A common test has to do when we make a vow. It is almost as if God is saying, “You want to make a public vow for this and that? Well, now I’ll put you into a situation where you can test and see if you keep your word.”
 - ii) God is interested in keeping our word. Therefore he tests our words in order to strengthen our relationship with him.
 - d) What we need to glean from this chapter is that God has a purpose in testing us.
 - i) In these chapters, it is David going through a bunch of life-threatening situations.
 - ii) David is not focused on the long-term implications for future bible readers. ☺
 - a) He is just busy trying to stay alive.
 - b) What is to be learned is that life’s tests have a purpose.
 - iii) When tragedy strikes, it helps to pray, “OK God, what do you want me to learn from this situation?” That alone may help our perspective.
 - iv) The problem is that God does not audibly yell out from heaven, “This is what I want to learn from this”. The answer to the trial usually involves submission. It is for us to say, “OK God, I don’t know why I’m going through us, but I’m going to trust You, accept it and keep moving”.
 - v) Let me give you an example. Suppose you really want to accomplish some goal. You pray and try, try and pray. (Let’s assume this goal doesn’t violate any biblical principals). After a good while, you say, “OK God, I guess you don’t want me to do this. I’ll accept your will and try something else”.
 - a) I have usually found that is where God steps in and gives you what He wants in the first place. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, “God gives you with his left hand what he has taken away with his right hand”. It wasn’t so much that God didn’t want you to accomplish that goal as much as God wanted you to trust Him to get there and not your own skills.
 - e) What does this have to do with Chapter 20? Glad you asked! ☺ The key to reading this chapter is to see David and Jonathan going through the trials of life moment by moment and watching their faith mature.
 - i) While they don’t understand the long-term implications until years later, these stories show us how God is working in the background of our lives to test us, mature us and ultimately to trust Him more with our lives.
2. Meanwhile, David is in trouble. ☺ We last left our hero running for his life from Saul.

- a) In the last chapter he ran to Samuel for protection. Saul sent men to kill David, and the soldiers started prophesying. We don't have any more details than that. Saul sent more men and the same thing happened. Saul sent a third bunch and the same thing happened. Finally Saul went himself and he stopped and started prophesying.
3. Verse 1: Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?"
- a) When we last read of David, he was hiding out in the presence of Samuel.
- i) Now we read of David fleeing this location and went to Jonathan.
- b) David's issue-of-the moment is to look for an explanation as to why Saul wanted him dead. All sorts of questions are going through David's mind.
- i) David was wondering why is Saul trying to kill him in the first place.
- ii) Then there is Saul's son Jonathan. Can David trust him? He is David's close friend, but he is still Saul's son. That leads to the line of questioning in the next set of verses.
- c) This is one of those situations where we as the reader know the outcome, but the heroes and villains of the story have no idea what is going to happen next.
- i) Here is David on the run for his life and all sorts of questions are running through his mind. He didn't understand the reason for all of it.
- ii) The lesson for us of course, is we are not privileged to God's knowledge. We go through our trials usually without any answers to the "why" question.
- d) Another thing I wondered is why did David run in the first place?
- i) After all, he was with the prophet Samuel who was considered the spiritual leader of the Israelites. Saul sent a bunch of troops to kill him and they all stopped and prophesied. Saul himself then came, stripped off his clothes and prophesied.
- ii) Wouldn't you think that "sign from God" was an indication to stay put?
- iii) Maybe David was thinking, "Once this prophesying "spell" on Saul wears off, he and his men are going to kill me. I better run while I have the chance."
- iv) Starting in Chapter 21 we will read of David lying and doing "unlawful" things in order to survive. One has to wonder if running from "God's place" was the correct thing to do. I don't have the answer; I'm just posing the question. ☺
4. Verse 2: "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!"
- a) Here is Jonathan's reaction to David questioning why his father would kill him.
- b) You can sense the hostility coming off the verse.
- i) What is implied in the verse is David is questioning Jonathan's loyalty. It is almost as if David is wondering to whom Jonathan is more loyal: David or Saul.
- ii) The next half of this chapter is all about Jonathan showing his loyalty to David. Jonathan is going to do a covert action to prove his loyalty to David over Saul.
- c) Back in Chapter 19, Verse 1, Saul gave the direct command to kill David and Jonathan was there as stated in that verse. Then after Jonathan defended David in the next few verses of Chapter 19, Saul said in Verse 6: "Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death."
- i) What we are reading here is Jonathan relying on his father's oath. In Jonathan mind, "If dad made an oath, it's good. He wouldn't go back on that oath".
- ii) That is why Jonathan said here, "Why would he hide this from me?"

5. Verse 3: But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."
- a) It might help to paraphrase this verse: Imagine David saying, "Of course you don't know that Saul still wants to kill me. He knows you are loyal to me and therefore, he would not tell you that he wanted me dead. I swear ("an oath") that all of this is true."
 - b) What is implied that when Saul sent men to kill David, and they failed as they stopped to prophesy, Jonathan was unaware of all the soldiers being sent to kill David.
 - c) OK, time to step back and take this in. David is fearing for his life.
 - i) We have this stressful conversation between David and Jonathan over the future.
 - ii) David didn't know how long he was going to live. The last sentence of Verse 3 speaks volumes as it says, "there is only a step between me and death".
 - iii) David is now a fugitive and he has to stay one step ahead of Saul to stay alive.
 - iv) Here is the question: Was David not trusting God at this moment? I don't know.
 - a) David knew he was anointed to be king. Did he forget about that?
 - b) Was it "God-ordained" for David to be on the run and fearful like this?
 - (1) In a sense "yes", because this period of David's life helped to shape him and mold him for his future years as a king.
 - c) At the same time, David did have a lack of faith. God was using this situation to test David and help him grow.
 - d) Let's face it, if David was going to be a king, this would mean there would be no higher authority other than God himself in his life. David would have to learn to be fully God-dependant as a king in order to rule.
 - v) What is to be learned from this is when we go through stressful situations and think "we're a step away from death", that is when we need to stop and realize that God does have a plan for our life.
 - a) If God saved you, then God does have a purpose for your life. We may not understand it but God does. God never promises us relief from stress, just peace during the rough periods of life if we get our perspective right.
 - b) Often we get to see the results and in hindsight, we see how it was necessary for us to go through that trial. There are some situations where we don't understand and won't understand until we get to heaven.
 - c) Chuck Swindoll once said that when we get to heaven, the only words we'll get out of our mouths is "Oh". Hey God, why did this happen? "Oh". Why did you allow that? "Oh".
6. Verse 4: Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."
- a) Jonathan is saying, "Come on David, test me. Let me prove my loyalty to you".
 - b) Verses 5-8 are David devising a plan to prove to Jonathan how Saul wants him dead.
 - c) Beginning in Verse 12, it is Jonathan comes up with an idea of how to prove his loyalty.
7. Verse 5: So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon festival, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.'⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me.
- a) There was a biblical based tradition that I'll call the "New Moon Festival".
 - i) In Israel their calendar was a lunar cycle. Every new moon was a new month.
 - ii) A feast was held on the first day of the month, which is the new moon.
 - iii) The Scripture for this festival is based on Numbers 10:10 and Numbers 28:14.

- b) David devises this plan to show Jonathan how much his father Saul wanted him dead. David says in effect, "Tomorrow is the monthly new moon festival. As you know, I'm always there like clockwork. ☺ I'll be absent tomorrow. If your father asks where I am, tell him I went to my hometown Bethlehem for their new moon festival. If you're father shrugs his shoulders and doesn't care, you know he's not mad. If your father loses his temper, then you know he wants me dead".
- i) David understands that Saul is obsessed with killing David. When someone is obsessed over them, they are angry when they are not where they are supposed to be. If Saul wanted David dead, then Saul wanted to know David's whereabouts.
- ii) Remember this whole test was for Jonathan. It was all about showing Jonathan that Saul still wanted to kill David.
8. Verse 8: (David still speaking) As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"
- a) David is pleading with Jonathan to do this test based on their "covenant" relationship.
- b) A covenant is what you and I think of a contract. If two people agree to do anything, legally, without writing it down, is known as an "oral contract". Such contracts were more binding to a Jewish person as it is a sin to violate an oath.
- c) The covenant took place back in Chapter 18, Verse 3. This is when Jonathan gave David his robe (his royal-price robe) and his armor. It was a sign of submission that Jonathan would be more loyal to David than to his family.
- d) Here David is putting that covenant to the test. What David is saying in effect is "OK Jonathan, you made a contract-relationship with me two chapters ago to show me priority over your father. Here is a chance to prove it. Go do the "new moon test" for me.
- e) Let's read the last two sentences again: If I (David) am guilty, then (you Jonathan) kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"
- i) Many believe that David was wondering about Jonathan's loyalty. This test was not only to prove Jonathan loyalty to David, but also show David that Jonathan wasn't a "secret spy" out to bring David to Saul.
- ii) David is saying in effect, "Look Jonathan, if you won't go along with my plan, that may mean you are more loyal to your father than me. You might as well kill me here on the spot if I am guilty of some sort of capital crime.
9. Verse 9: "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"
- a) You can sense that David was questioning Jonathan's loyalty. Jonathan was saying, "Look, if I even had a clue that my father was trying to kill you, I would let you know".
10. Verse 10: David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"
- a) Now we have a "new problem". Jonathan is going to go the "New Moon Festival" with his father. Suppose Jonathan finds out his father wants David dead:
- i) How is Jonathan going to warn David without his father finding out.
- ii) If his father finds out that Jonathan is going to warn David, his father might try to kill Jonathan as well (which does happen in a few verses).

11. Verse 11: "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together. ¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? ¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family--not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."
- a) Let me paraphrase Jonathan: "If I find out my father wants to kill you and I don't tell you, may God do harm to me if I fail to tell you. If I do tell you, then you must promise never to fail to show kindness to me or my descendants".
 - b) Jonathan is taking a new oath in these verses. As I stated, an oath is "serious business" as it is a sin to violate that oath.
 - i) One of the 10 commandments is "not to take God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7).
 - ii) That commandment is not about "accidentally swearing and using God's name". It is about taking vows before God and keeping them. The point is if we invoke God's name in a vow, God's "name" (reputation) is now on the line and God expects us to keep it. That is why God often tests us to see if we keep that vow.
 - c) In that culture, when a new king comes into power (who is not a descendant of the old king), the new king would often kill the descendants of the old king so they would not seize power or get revenge. Jonathan was concerned about that. Therefore, Verse 15 is Jonathan asking David to take a vow that he would preserve his family after David takes power one day.
 - i) I believe Jonathan thought that David would never kill his family at this stage in his life. Jonathan understands that people often change when they have power. What Jonathan is saying is, "Hey David, years from now, when you come into power, have mercy on my family. Don't be like other kings".
 - ii) When we get to 2nd Samuel, we will read of David keeping that vow to Jonathan.
12. Verse 16: So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.
- a) In Verse 16, Jonathan is making an oath saying in effect, "May David's enemies give an account for their actions one day."
 - i) That is a powerful statement in that Jonathan understood his father was among those who considered David an enemy. It applies to the staff and soldiers of Saul who were under his authority.
 - b) Verse 17 is Jonathan asking David to swear his oath again that no harm would come to Jonathan and his descendants.
 - i) Here's the "kicker" of Verse 17. David didn't keep the oath to Jonathan because David needed a friend when everyone was trying to kill him. David didn't do this out of "necessity". David did this out of love for Jonathan.
 - ii) The greatest motivator for any action is love. It is greater than necessity, greater than "an asset", greater than greed, greater than revenge etc. This verse makes a point that David did this out of his love for Jonathan.
 - iii) That is what God desires for us. He wants obedience, not out of guilt, greed for heavenly rewards, etc., but out of a love relationship. Our love for God is what should motivate us to serve Him.

13. Verse 19: Then Jonathan said to David: "Tomorrow is the New Moon festival. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.
- a) These verses describe Jonathan devising a plan as to how he will tell David if his father Saul still wants to kill David.
 - b) Let me paraphrase Jonathan: "Look David, tomorrow is the monthly feast at the king's palace where all the key people, including yourself are required to be in attendance. Now go hide in the fields so you won't be there at this feast. If my dad is angry, I will know. You go hide out in the fields. I can't make direct contact with you, or my father might find out and kill me. Here will be our code signal. I will take my bows and arrows and my assistant for target practice. I will fire three arrows. If I shoot them past where you are hiding, run for your life. If I shoot them in front of you, you can come home. In other words, go towards the arrow. If I accidentally hit you, then ignore the message." (OK, I made up that last part. ☺)
 - c) You have to understand how this message is going to affect David's life.
 - i) Imagine David hiding in the fields of tall wheat or behind a rock. He has to sit there for a day or so, just waiting for a bunch of arrows to be shot in the air. David must have been in fear waiting for that message.
 - ii) David knew if the arrows were shot past him, that would mean he couldn't see Jonathan ever again, he couldn't go home to his wife (Saul's daughter), he couldn't go to his family home, as Saul would look for him there.
 - iii) I'm speculating that David spent a lot of time in prayer on this one. David didn't commit any sin. He was obedient to God and it wasn't David's fault that God was making him successful. Further, he had no idea what the future held.
 - iv) This gets back to the idea of "testing". We can pray all day and night for "good arrows" so we can go back home, but we have to accept whatever results happen as part of God's plan for our lives.
14. Verse 23: And about the matter you and I discussed--remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."
- a) Jonathan ends this speech to remind David's of his vow to protect him and his family.
 - i) It is as if Jonathan is saying, "Look David, no matter what happens with my father, you will be king one day. No matter how hard my father tries to kill you, I understand that you are the anointed one to be the next king. Right now, we're just stalling for time until that event happens. When it happens, remember me and my family and how I have helped you."
 - ii) In my introduction, I stated this chapter is about testing. The testing isn't just for David, it is for Jonathan as well. God is testing Jonathan's loyalty in a matter of stress to do the right thing.
15. Verse 24: So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean--surely he is unclean."
- a) The scene now switches to Saul's "castle" as the king. Day one of the "New Moon festival" takes place. The place where David always sat was noticeably empty.

- b) There is a cute detail to note about Saul: "He sat in his customary place by the wall".
 - i) By sitting by the wall, no one could attack him from behind. It is a subtle reminder of Saul's life of fear.
 - ii) The verse mentions Abner. Abner is King Saul's commander of his army (1st Samuel 14:50). You can also think of Abner also as being Saul's chief bodyguard. Having Abner next to Saul was another sign of Saul desiring protection.
 - c) When Saul saw that David was not there, his first thought, is "Something must have happened so that David is ceremonially unclean".
 - i) In Leviticus 22:3-7, there is a section about being "ceremonially unclean".
 - a) The bible had a bunch of rules for Jewish people that make them "unclean" to come to festival. Examples include touching a dead body or some aspect that involved blood (e.g., a woman and her menstrual period).
 - b) One is "unclean" for only 24 hours and there is a ritual washing to make them ceremonially "clean" again.
 - d) What is impressive is the fact that Saul thought, "David is not here, something is wrong".
 - i) That alone speaks volumes of David's reputation. Despite the fact that Saul tried to kill him twice, Saul knew that David would be at the monthly festival because that is the sort of character David is.
 - ii) In life, one must have the reputation of being trustworthy and a "man or woman of their word". If we make a commitment, we need to fulfill that commitment or at least get word in advance if we cannot. One of my pet peeves is "flaky people". Those are people who give their word to a commitment and then don't follow through. As I've stated before, if we can't be trustworthy in "things of this world", how will anyone ever take us seriously if we talk about God.
16. Verse 27: But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"
- a) Saul knew by the second day of this festival that David was absent on purpose.
 - b) Notice the first person Saul asks about David's whereabouts is Jonathan. This means that Saul understood about their friendship.
 - c) Next, notice Saul calls David the "Son of Jessie". That is meant as an insult.
 - i) Saul did not say, "Where is David, the guy who killed Goliath?"
 - ii) Saul did not say, "Where is David, my son in law?"
 - iii) Saul did not say, "Where is David, the one who has killed thousands of soldiers of the Philistines, our enemies?"
 - iv) To call David "Son of Jessie" is to call David "the son of a nobody famous".
 - v) If we read nothing else in this chapter, we can sense Saul's jealousy and hatred come out of that one statement alone.
17. Verse 28: Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."
- a) Here we read of Jonathan lying to protect David. He is repeating the "cover story" that David told him to say. Some believe Jonathan was telling a half-truth and David did go to Bethlehem the first day of the festival.

- b) The big question: Was it ok for Jonathan to lie like that?
 - i) After all, if Jonathan said, "I don't know David's whereabouts", that would be more suspicious as Saul knew Jonathan and David are best friends.
 - ii) Saul would be suspicious about this excuse as "if it were true", Jonathan would have told his father prior to the festival starting.
 - iii) Back to the question: Is it ok to lie for a "greater good"? Is this a case of "higher authority"? The term "higher authority" has to do with disobeying man's orders when it violates God's orders. Therefore, that term does not apply here.
 - a) I don't have a set answer. I can think of situations where it is acceptable to lie for a greater good. In wartime, if one is a spy and trying to protect the lives of thousands of soldiers by gathering information, I would say it is acceptable.
 - b) As a general rule of thumb, the answer is no. Again it gets back to being a good witness for God and being "a man or woman of your word."
 - c) In this situation, I would probably argue Jonathan did the right thing. In a few verses, Saul will try to kill Jonathan for protecting David. This was a "no-win" situation for Jonathan. The important point is that Jonathan publicly shows his loyalty to David in a few verses.
18. Verse 30: Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? ³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"
- a) What we are seeing here is Saul's jealousy over David manifesting itself in anger toward Saul's son Jonathan.
 - i) This reminds me of a Proverb "Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (Proverbs 27:4 NIV)
 - b) Saul insults his son by calling him a "son of a perverse and rebellious woman".
 - i) The actual Hebrew is a little meaner. The implication is that Jonathan's mother is a whore and Jonathan is a bastard son.
 - ii) I can just hear Saul's wife hear of this and say, "Excuse me, I believe he's your son too you know!" ☹
 - iii) This reminds me of a "cheap shot" taken at Jesus. Jesus got into a heated discussion with some Pharisees in John 8:41:
 - a) The Pharisee's responded to Jesus by saying, "Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father – God." (NKJV)
 - b) The Pharisee's are calling Jesus a bastard. It is as if they heard about the virgin birth story and didn't believe it. They were saying Mary slept with someone and Jesus is a bastard child.
 - iv) My point here is that when you are "in the flesh", it is amazing what comes out of your mouth. Jesus said, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Matthew 15:11 NKJV)
 - c) Saul's point of his insult was that by Jonathan taking sides with David and not Saul, Jonathan was bringing shame to his mother.
 - i) Saul was using guilt as a motivating factor to hurt Jonathan. It is to say, "Think of your poor mother who you are harming by siding with David".
 - ii) Never underestimate Satan's weapons to make you feel guilty about doing the right thing. Satan will try anger, guilt or whatever to get you to do His will (anything but God's) over God's will.

- d) Notice the last part of Verse 31 is Saul ordering Jonathan to send for David and get him.
 - i) Saul assumes that Jonathan does know of his whereabouts.
 - ii) Jonathan violates a direct command of his father and his king to get David.
 - iii) That is an example of “Higher Authority”. Here was Jonathan being asked to violate the command of “honor your mother and father” as well as to disobey a direct order of his king in order to protect David.
 - iv) This is Jonathan being tested, and he passes with flying colors.
19. Verse 32: "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. ³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.
- a) Jonathan questions his father’s orders, and his father responds by throwing a spear to try to kill Jonathan. What is implied is Saul missed and Jonathan fled the room.
 - i) This again shows why “Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten of thousands.” (1st Samuel 18:7, et.al.) Saul was a lousy shot. ☹
 - b) Nobody else in the room stopped to help Jonathan. After all, Jonathan just violated a direct order of the king and his father. In fear of their own lives, no one else moved.
 - i) Remember that others in the room were aware that David was rising in power and Saul was losing power. Yet, they feared their own lives to say anything. This also speaks volumes of Jonathan’s bravery.
 - c) Until this point, Jonathan was still in denial that Saul wanted David dead.
 - i) Jonathan remembered the vow that his father made in Chapter 19, Verse 6 that he would not harm David. Now here we see of Saul going back on that vow.
 - d) You have to imagine how hard this was for Jonathan.
 - i) This was his father he was disobeying. All children want their fathers to be proud of them and what they are doing. Further, he was disobeying his king and Jonathan understood that his life was at stake.
 - ii) Jonathan is a living example of Jesus’ principal:
 - a) “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39, NIV)
 - b) That description by Jesus just fit Jonathan perfectly. Jonathan was willing to stand up for what was right more than his own father. Jonathan was willing to take a stand for David, even at the cost of his own life.
20. Verse 34: Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.
- a) It appears the one trait that Saul did pass on to his son was his anger.
 - i) Saul had a temper and tried to kill both David and his son Jonathan.
 - ii) Here we read of Jonathan leaving the table in anger over what his father did.
 - b) Christians tend to think that “anger” is a sin. That is not stated in the bible.
 - i) Psalm 4:4 states, “Be angry and do not sin”. Paul quotes that line in Ephesians 4:26. In both cases, it is saying there is a time and place for anger, but don’t let your anger control your actions.
 - ii) There is a Christian buzz-term called “Righteous Anger”. It refers to being angry at a sin. We read of Jesus being angry in Mark 3:5 because people refused to believe in Jesus, they just wanted to see miracles.
 - iii) A similar Christian buzz-term is “hate sin and love the sinner”. Christians tend to overemphasize loving the sinner and underemphasize hating sin.

- iv) My point is there are situations where anger is an appropriate human reaction. The danger comes in how we handle that anger. The correct answer is to give that anger to God and let Him deal with the situation.
21. Verse 35: In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, ³⁶ and he said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. ³⁷ When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" ³⁸ Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. ³⁹ (The boy knew nothing of all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, "Go, carry them back to town."
- a) Here we read of the "secret code" being played out between Jonathan and David.
 - b) This is Jonathan keeping his word to shoot the arrows either in front of David to come back home or beyond David to go run. For David, it meant "follow the arrows".
 - c) Remember that David had no idea what took place for the last two days in the palace. David was busy sleeping in the dirt for two days. He was probably hungry, lonely, worried and desperate.
 - i) Imagine the pain David must have felt when those arrows went past him.
 - d) One thing that interested me, was "Why give all of these details?" The text could have just said, "And Jonathan fired three arrows past David as planned to warn him.".
 - i) Instead, we have all of these details about the event.
 - ii) I believe part of it is to show Jonathan's loyalty to David. Despite Jonathan's anger over his father and the previous day's events, Jonathan kept his vow.
 - iii) This gets back to "Be angry and do not sin". Jonathan was probably still angry, but he didn't let his anger affect his actions.
 - e) Another tidbit is that Jonathan told his boy-assistant to "Hurry! Go Quickly! Don't Stop!"
 - i) I believe that was a message to David. I believe Jonathan wanted David to hear that message and to start running once the boy was gone from the scene.
 - ii) (Either that, or Jonathan was taking his anger out on the kid. ☺)
22. Verse 41: After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together--but David wept the most.
- a) Here is the big goodbye scene. In Eastern Culture, it is common for male friends to kiss each other. There is nothing sexual about it. This is just a cultural issue, just like in some European cultures, it is common for males to kiss each other on both cheeks.
 - b) The verse said, "David wept the most". It also says he "bowed three times" to Jonathan.
 - i) Here was David living in the field for two days. The pressure of not knowing the answer probably harmed him as much as the answer itself. I suspect it was a relief just to know Jonathan fired the arrows as much as the results.
 - ii) Here was David, now thinking he would never see Jonathan again, never be able to go home again, never see his wife again and be a fugitive. That was overwhelming to David and he let it out.
23. Verse 42: Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.
- a) Jonathan gets in the final word.
 - i) Give Jonathan a little credit too. The verse says, "Jonathan went back to the town".
 - a) Jonathan knew his father could kill him for this. Yet Jonathan went right back to where his father was.

- b) The verse emphasizes their bond of friendship. They both took a vow, which neither one could go back upon. They stated how they would be friends forever and that friendship would continue on to their descendants.
 - c) David would now live the life as a fugitive. Most suspect the time frame from this point to the time David became the king was about 10-15 years.
24. OK, we've now run through the chapter. I want to get to what I consider is the important stuff!
- a) Time to take a deep breath and pay attention. ☺
 - b) This chapter was mostly about Jonathan. There were many more verses dedicated to the action of Jonathan than it was to the actions of David.
 - c) If you think about this chapter in context to the surrounding chapters, you wonder why it was necessary. After all, the main hero of this story is David. Most of 1st Samuel is about the lives of King Saul and King David and to see their contrasts.
 - i) Yet, here in Chapter 20, the focus is on Saul's son Jonathan and his decision to show his loyalty to David over his father Saul.
 - ii) You could have summarized this one chapter in a sentence of two.
 - a) The chapter could have read, "And David fled from the presence of Saul since Saul wanted him dead, and Jonathan helped him."
 - b) What we get is a whole chapter of details of how Jonathan helped David.
 - c) The big question is why are all of these details given?
 - d) To answer, that question, one has to think about the word picture in play here:
 - i) David is often a word-picture of the Messiah. One of the Messiah's titles is the "Son of David" as the promise of the Messiah is given to David (2nd Samuel 16).
 - ii) Here is Jonathan, knowing that he is not "God's anointed". He knows that because of his father, he is not next in line to be king.
 - iii) Jonathan "gets on the right team" and submits his will to David's.
 - iv) In this chapter, we as human beings are asked to be like Jonathan.
 - a) We must choose to be followers of God's plans for our lives, or followers of our own desires for our lives.
 - b) The "Saul's of the world" want to be happy, be successful, live for pleasure and have a nice life. There is nothing wrong with any of those things. The problem has to do with submission to God. You can have all of those things without submission to God. You may find happiness, but you'll never find joy. God created all of us with a need to please Him as well as ourselves. If we ignore that need, we start throwing spears at people. ☺
 - v) This chapter is all about Jonathan passing God's test for his life.
 - a) Jonathan choose to follow God, even at the price of disobedience to his own father and disobedience to his king.
 - b) Sometimes God asks us to make similar choices. For example, if your parents don't believe in God and don't want you to commit your life to serving Jesus, (let's assume you're an adult) they may use guilt, anger and "commands" to get you to make the same bad choices as they are making.
 - c) It takes boldness to take a stand for God. God is looking for "Jonathan's" to take a stand for him despite the risk. That is why this chapter glorifies the actions of Jonathan. This chapter is a positive statement of Jonathan's life as he choose to follow his "heavenly" father and not his "earthly" father Saul.

- e) Some people wonder, “Why did God pick David and not Jonathan to be the next king of Israel? After all, Jonathan is a good guy? Why would God make Jonathan suffer and be submissive to David? Why didn’t God pick Jonathan to be the direct ancestor of the Messiah?
 - i) There are lots of answers, including the sovereignty of God to do as He pleases and not as we think is logical.
 - ii) My theory (take it as that) is God picked Jonathan for this specific role as God wanted to use Jonathan as a word picture of “us” choosing either “King David” or “King Saul” to rule over us.
 - a) We don’t read of Jonathan being a sinful person. If anything, he is outstanding and would have been a great king for Israel.
 - b) Yet Jonathan understood that to be righteous (good standing) in front of God was not to brag about his goodness, but to do God’ will and be submissive to God.
 - (1) This ties to Paul’s statement, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”. (Romans 7:18a NKJV).
 - c) Jonathan submitted to David. David is a word-picture of the Messiah and a word-picture of one anointed by God. Saul is a word-picture of “anointed by the flesh” to do one’s own will. Jonathan made the right choice, even at the point of rejecting his own future power, his own father and the will of his king.
 - iii) There is a parallel to Moses here. Moses was the prince of Egypt. He chose to walk away from that role to follow God:
 - a) He (Moses) chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.” (Hebrews 11:23 NIV)
 - b) Here is Jonathan choosing to walk away from his “earthly family” to follow God’s will. In this case, God’s will was submission to David.
 - iv) The question for all of us, at any given moment is, are we like Jonathan, choosing to follow God and the “Son of God?” or are we following “the flesh”?
 - v) The reason this chapter makes such a big deal about Jonathan is that it is a wonderful testimony of taking a stand for God, even at the risk of one’s own life.
 - a) Jonathan bet on the right horse. ☺ Although he didn’t get to be king, I’m speculating he is getting far greater rewards in heaven than he ever would have gotten as King of Israel.

25. Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, Give us the boldness moment by moment to submit ourselves to your will and not our own. Help us during the rough moments of our life to continue to stand by You and for You and know that our lives serve Your purpose in some way. Thank you for the lessons Jonathan teaches us in taking a stand for what is right, even when everyone around us lacks the courage to do likewise. May Your will be done, and may we live a life that is pleasing to you. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.