

Jonathan: The Responder
Sunday School Lesson 3
Personality and God's Purpose
1 Samuel 14
6/28/2020

Introduction: When we think of Jonathan, the first thing that most often comes to mind is loyalty. Jonathan was fiercely loyal to David, and the two shared a deep friendship with each other. Regarding personality, though, loyalty is not a personality trait. It is a developed trait. Also, while Jonathan was loyal to David, one could argue that he was disloyal to his father. He was placed in the middle between these two men, and he ultimately sided with David because he knew his father was in the wrong. Jonathan was loyal first to God. When it comes to his personality, the Bible paints the picture of Jonathan as one who had a responder personality. A responder is an outgoing person who is prone to take quick action. In many ways, Jonathan's personality was similar to David's. Both men naturally responded quickly to situations. The main difference we might observe between the two is that David was more inclined to outwardly display his feelings. Their similarities may have been one of the reasons that Jonathan and David were such close friends. If not for the sins of Saul, Jonathan would have become the next king of Israel. Truthfully, his personality and his character made him a great candidate for the throne. Yet, the Lord had other plans for Jonathan. As we look at the lesson this morning, we are going to see how the Lord was able to use Jonathan's personality to deliver Israel and to protect David. We'll also observe the challenges and pitfalls that come along to those who have the responder type of personality.

I. THE LORD USED JONATHAN'S PERSONALITY TO RESOLVE A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR ISRAEL. (1 SAMUEL 13:17 – 14:23)

- A. Notice that Israel was stuck in a dangerous position without any direction or deliverance (1 Samuel 13:17-23).** The Israelites found themselves in a tough position when the Philistines decided to garrison against them. They cut off all of the blacksmiths from Israel, and when the Israelites attempted to get their swords sharpened by the Philistines, they destroyed their weapons instead. The only two people who had swords were Saul and Jonathan. Saul had not been tested in battle much at this point. He was not certain what he was supposed to do. The Philistines had over 36,000 warriors ready for battle, and Saul had 600 men who were not. The rest of the Israelites were avoiding the conflict, and many were even hiding in caves. To make matters worse, Saul had gotten scared and made a grave error. He put himself in the position of Samuel and offered a sacrifice that he was not supposed to offer. When Samuel arrived, he reproved Saul for his error, and then he left him without giving any type of reassurance regarding the battle that was imminent. It's hard to envision a more dire situation than the one's that the Israelites found themselves in.
- B. Notice that Jonathan's quick action ushered in a miracle from the Lord (1 Samuel 14:1-23).** Jonathan was a person who took quick action. When the Philistines had first started to come against the Israelites, it was Jonathan who defeated their garrison in Geba. That defeat was the reason that the Philistines had now gathered such a large army against the Israelites. As Jonathan saw his father sitting under a tree, he decided that it was now time to act. He took his armor bearer, and he left without even letting anyone know that he was gone. Obviously, Jonathan was a man of faith. His faith is ultimately what led him to go and risk a potential battle. Yet, Jonathan still could have had faith and waited for orders from his father at the same time. His plan was to let himself be caught by the Philistines! If they called him up to them, he was going to take that as a sign from the Lord to go to battle. That's exactly what happened, and he and his armor bearer killed twenty Philistines. His action was what the Lord used to bring the victory. The Philistines were so frightened that they ran away and warred against themselves. A person who is quick to action can be a great asset to the Lord, as long as they act in faith and obedience to Him.

II. THE LORD USED JONATHAN'S PERSONALITY TO FORM A LASTING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JONATHAN AND DAVID. (1 SAMUEL 18:1-4; 2 SAMUEL 1:26)

- A. Notice that David needed a friend to help him navigate the challenges of working in the palace (1 Samuel 18-19).** As David moved from life as a shepherd to life in the palace, he was going to be faced with challenges that he had not yet encountered. His time there with Saul was important preparation for the day that he would become king. As a young man, David had to deal with an increasingly demented king who was both jealous and dangerous. This was a far cry from the jealousy that comes from sibling rivalries. There are often points in our lives where we are especially in need of friendship to help us through the challenges that we face in those hours. While the Lord is always a friend that sticketh closer

than a brother, the Lord does bring others into our lives to help us through certain times and obstacles that we are facing. When David was in the wilderness, the Lord brought friends in his life to help him through that difficult time. David needed a friend in the palace, and he definitely was not going to find that in King Saul!

- B. Notice that Jonathan's responsive personality led him to an instant yet deep friendship with David (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 2 Samuel 1:26).** Given Jonathan's personality and character, it's a great mystery why he did not fight Goliath himself. Perhaps, it would not have been proper for a member of the king's house to respond to a challenge from a vulgar person like Goliath. Maybe the king did not permit Jonathan to fight. It may also be that Jonathan just had a moment of weakness and was not willing to go. Whatever the case, Jonathan watched as David battled Goliath. Afterwards, David returned to bring the head of Goliath to King Saul. The Bible tells us that as soon as David was done speaking to the king, Jonathan's soul was knitted with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul. Talk about a quick forming of friendship! Jonathan's personality was one of quick decisions, and Jonathan's character was such that he was drawn to others who had strong faith in God. I believe the Bible shows us that Jonathan was the type of person who made quick friendships. This can be a strength that God uses for His purpose of encouraging others. Of course, we must also be aware that this can be a hindrance if we do not form friendships with those who are equally yoked with us.

III. THE LORD USED JONATHAN'S PERSONALITY TO HELP HIM ACT AGAINST HIS OWN SELF-INTERESTS. (1 SAMUEL 19-20; 23:15-18)

- A. Notice that Jonathan was the heir to the throne, and David was a threat to his claiming the crown (1 Chronicles 8:33; 1 Samuel 16:13).** The most amazing part of David and Jonathan's friendship is the fact that they had what most people would consider competing interests. Jonathan was the rightful heir to the throne of Israel, as he was the eldest son of Saul. David, though, had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next person to rule over Israel. One would think that Jonathan would struggle to accept David as the next king, yet we do not find any account of Jonathan ever questioning or doubting David's claim to the throne.
- B. Notice that Jonathan's personality (1 Samuel 19-20; 23:15-18).** Again, it needs to be stated that it was ultimately Jonathan's Godly character that allowed him to stay humble and not grow envious of David. Yet, we can see how Jonathan's personality also helped him to handle the situation. When Saul asked Jonathan to help him kill David, Jonathan did not even pause to consider it. He had a quick response for his father. In Saul's mind, it made sense for Jonathan to want David out of the picture. In fact, when Jonathan later helped David to escape from Saul, the king was furious with his son. He told him that he had done this to his own confusion (1 Samuel 20:30). He assumed that Jonathan didn't grasp that he was essentially giving up the throne by helping David escape. Jonathan understood this (see 1 Samuel 23:15-18); however, he didn't take time to think about it. He just went straight into action to keep David safe. A person who is a responder may find it easier to ignore their own interests, as long as they are a person of Godly character! Otherwise, the first response may be out of selfishness instead.

IV. THE RESPONDER PERSONALITY ALSO HAS SEVERAL CHALLENGES THAT WE MUST BE AWARE OF. (1 SAMUEL 14:29-43; 20:33-35)

- A. Notice that the responder personality may answer a matter too quickly (1 Samuel 14:29).** King Saul made a foolish decree that no one could eat until he had been avenged. Jonathan was unaware of this order, so he ate honey as he passed by it. When he was confronted by the people, Jonathan did not stop to consider what he was saying. He needlessly undermined his father's authority by telling the people that his father had troubled the land. Although Jonathan was right about Saul, it still was not appropriate for him to answer in such a way. Those with a responder personality may have a tendency to answer a matter that does not need an answer, especially if they know that their answer is right. The remedy for this is to exercise Godly wisdom at all times. Jonathan was tired and allowed himself to answer inappropriately.
- B. Notice that the responder personality may struggle with patience (1 Samuel 14:43; 20:33-35).** Jonathan struggled to be patient with his father. Of course, knowing King Saul, we might be able to argue that he was somewhat justified. When Saul confronted Jonathan over the honey, Jonathan mocked his father. Was he really going to die for eating a tiny bit of honey? When Jonathan confronted Saul about David, he was filled with anger at his father. He was so grieved over David that he could not eat until he was able to safely help him escape the next day. Overall, though, Jonathan, was able to manage his personality and find patience with his father. In David's song of mourning for Jonathan, he noted how Jonathan and Saul died in harmony together. They were not in strife with each other. A person with a responder personality must be diligent in seeking patience from the Lord.