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Title: *Hidden Hurts #4 - Loss of Friendship*

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18

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We've been in this series that we've called *Hidden Hurts*. What we've been doing is rather than working through a specific text, which is often what we do, we've been focusing on some of the stories in David's life, whether they're David or somebody else in his life. And today we're going to look at the loss of a friendship.

A few weeks ago, when we talked about loneliness, we talked about what knits us together with people can be represented by a Venn diagram. If you have three circles, the middle section represents the intersection of those. We talked about how when you share life, values, and passions with somebody, then it's more likely that you will have a significant connection.

And what happens with some friendships over time is just life happens and we no longer share life with somebody. Maybe they move away, or we move away. The stage of life is different and suddenly, we are not around them anymore. We lose a friendship with no malice on either side. Sometimes values change. Things that you used to share are no longer shared, and you begin to say, "I'm not sure that we're moving in the same direction" so you feel the loss. Sometimes it is a loss of shared passion. But what I'm guessing is almost all of us know the pain of having had a friendship and then looking around one day and saying, "I don't feel like that person is a friend in the same way that they used to be."

Before we look at this, I want to just point to something else that has happened recently, and that is in 2023, at the beginning of the year, there was a football game that was not just suspended, but it was actually stopped and never replayed or finished. I'm talking about the Buffalo Bills and Cincinnati Bengals. Maybe some of you remember this and the reason it was stopped is a player, Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field. He had a cardiac arrest. And the NFL, I think, rightly said it seems wrong to continue to play a game when this man may be dead or dying right in our midst.

Now he's making a strong recovery, but in the moment, nobody knew that. And because it was a holiday, a nationally televised game, a lot of people were watching it live. And when they cut away to the network, one of the commentators on ESPN just said, "I don't know what else to do?" And so, he prayed. He just prayed on air about this situation.

His name was Dan Orlovsky. And I saw that after the fact. But what caught my attention was not that he prayed. It was the comment of somebody else a couple of days later. The man's name is Nick Wright. He is another one of these commentators who speaks on sports all the time for a living. And here is what he said about the prayer that Dan Orlovsky prayed the day that Damar Hamlin collapsed.

He said, "It made me a little envious in that moment because I am not a person of faith. And since I realized I did not have a foundation or a higher purpose or something in the face of inexplicable tragedy, I have been a little envious in that moment and ever since." The reason that caught my attention is that if you are a person of faith or not a person of faith, chances are when you face something that is challenging, maybe the apparent life-threatening collapse of somebody you do not know, or the loss of a friendship, a difficult marriage, loneliness, a broken dream, something in your life, if you do not have a foundation, you can have all the tips, all the ideas of how to address it, and it will not necessarily help you. And that can be true if you are a person of longstanding faith who says, yes, I kind of believe in God, but what I need right now is a way to navigate this. Or if you are a person who says God is not really part of my equation, faith has not been a part of it. So, like Nick Wright says, I wish that I had something more.

What we hope is happening in this series together is that we are pointing to this foundation. Two things will help us address our hurts at a core level, not just some tips to get through. Today we will talk about the loss of a friendship. And David had three pivotal relationships.

He had more relationships, but three that were pretty important. One was Samuel early in his life, who spoke into his life, words of blessing and vision and was a champion for him. Then, in the middle of his life, he had Jonathan who was his friend and walked with him. And then at the end of his life, he had Nathan who challenged him.

I said this a few weeks ago, but I don't think it's a coincidence that those were the relationships at those phases of life, because early in life, what we need is somebody who believes in us. What we need in the middle of life is someone to walk with us. Sometimes what we need toward the end of life is somebody to still challenge us. Not that we don't need all of them at all phases, but that's part of what's important.

So, we're going to explore how David's relationship with Jonathan became a lost friendship. And we're going to cover four chapters because the stories are told in four chapters. Are you ready? Don't worry. I'm not going to go deep into four chapters. We'll just hit the high point.

Here's where the friendship was discovered. It's in 1 Samuel 18. Here's what we're told in verse one of chapter 18. "After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself." And what happened here was that Jonathan and David discovered their friendship.

I think it was C.S. Lewis who wrote about friendship, and he said, "The way that friendship happens isn't that we decide we're going to have a friend and we make a friend. It's when we find ourselves facing the same direction as somebody and constantly saying, me too. Like, I feel the way you feel about that. I see that the way you see it. I feel about this the way you feel about it. Me too." This is what happened to Jonathan and David. They suddenly became one in spirit. They started to say, this is how I see it, and this is how you see it. And they loved each other. We're told that he loved him as he loved himself.

I've been reading a little commentary on the Book of Proverbs by a man named Derek Kidner. I've read it several times over the years. It's an excellent little commentary, but I've been reading it again to prepare for our Five Good Minutes podcast. That is on our Orchard Hill Plus station where we're just walking through the Book of Proverbs together in little five-minute increments.

At the beginning of his commentary, he has a section where he talks about some of the things that Proverbs speaks about. In it he says, one of the things that Proverbs points to is friendship. He says friendship in Proverbs has four elements, and he gives the verses, I won't give you all of this, but he says this. Friendship in Proverbs and the book of Proverbs is this and that it is constancy. So, somebody who is always there for us, is candor, the ability to basically say, I'm going to speak truth to you, I'm going to say to you what's important. It's counsel, the willingness to say something that would direct a friend. Then there's tact and there's a sense of consideration.

So, we may find people in our lives who are willing to speak the truth to us but don't do it with tact or people who care about how we feel but won't speak the truth to us. But you need all four elements: somebody who will stick with you, speak the truth, give counsel and advice, and do it with tact and consideration.

And we don't know in the chapter of 1 Samuel 18 exactly what knit Jonathan and David's hearts together. But what we know is that they became one in spirit and that they discovered their friendship. And so that's the first chapter. So, this won't take too long. Then we find the story again picks up in first Samuel 20, and here's where now we have a crisis.

The crisis reveals the friendship. Because what happened was David was anointed to be king. Saul was the current king. Jonathan is Saul's son. And so, Saul doesn't want David to live because if he lives and becomes king, it means Saul never becomes king. And so, he tries to kill David. You can see where the complication is here for the friendship.

And Jonathan has, in a sense, a choice at this moment. Do I side with my dad and try to cooperate with him so he can kill David, so I can be king? Or will I choose friendship? And one of the things that's true about a good friendship is it will often choose, if not primarily choose to say, I will choose your good over my good.

And the crisis reveals this in the moment for Jonathan and David. Here's where we see this. This is chapter 20, verse 41. It says, "After the boy had gone," this is a boy that they had agreed would shoot arrows, and this boy retrieved arrows. "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. 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."

And what you have here is Jonathan saying, I am not going to participate in my dad's plan to kill you. And he was his friend. And that's why David probably wept. And there was a covenant, a decision to say, this is what our friendship will be.

Somebody sent me a story recently about what friendship is. And what the story said is that a man was walking down the street and he fell into a pit. And first, a doctor came along and wrote him a prescription but wasn't able to help him get out of the pit. Then an educator came along, and when the educator came along, he was able to instruct him on how not to fall into a pit in the future but didn't help him get out of the pit. And then a priest came along who offered to pray for him but didn't help him get out of the pit.

But then a friend came along and he jumped in the pit. And the friend said why did you do that? He said, now neither of us can get out. And he said, but now I'm in here with you. In some ways, a friend in a crisis is proven because they say, I will go with you to the hardest places. This is what you see with Jonathan and David.

Now, what happens here is that David never sees Jonathan again from this point forward. So, he discovered a great friendship. He saw the proof of it in crisis. And now even though they're living, their lives take them in different directions, and he does

not have the experience of this friendship. And again, this is an experience many of us will have in different ways and different seasons of our lives.

The story picks up again in second Samuel chapter one, and it's here that David finds out that Saul and Jonathan have been killed in battle. So now the path to the throne is clear and all of a sudden Jonathan's dead. Saul is dead. And right before verse 17, the little tag in my Bible says David laments for Saul and Jonathan. It says this, verse 18, "and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar)."

I had to look up what the Book of Jashar was. I didn't know this off the top of my head. It's only referenced here and in one other place in the Bible. It was a type of public oracle. So, what's happening is, David is saying, I want everyone to know the lament for Jonathan and Saul. And the lament goes on for a lot of verses. Verse 23 says this, "Saul and Jonathan - in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." Verse 26. "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women."

Now, some people have read that and assume that implies that there was some kind of a sexual relationship between Jonathan and David. I don't think that's what's going on here. I think David is lamenting the loss of a friendship, and he's saying this is hard for me.

Now, there are two approaches to lament in our world. Some of us are really good at lamenting. And what I mean by that is we lament everything. We go to the grocery store, and they don't have our favorite ice cream, and we lament. It's kind of a first-world problem. You know, something goes wrong in our lives and we're like, oh, poor me. But what a lot of us do is lament things like no ice cream at the grocery store, but when it's something hard, like a friendship, we try to act like it doesn't matter.

And the lament here was David publicly acknowledging his pain. He was celebrating the life that was. And he's saying this is hard for me. And sometimes by lamenting the loss of a friendship, what we're doing is we're saying I'm acknowledging to myself and ultimately to God that this is hard. And knowing that what breaks my heart, breaks God's heart allows us to navigate it.

But there's something else that happens, and I believe this is seen in Proverbs chapter 18, verse 24. Now, who wrote Proverbs? By and large Solomon. There are other writers. Who's Solomon? He's David's son. So, how does Solomon get the

wisdom that he writes about in Proverbs? I mean, obviously, there's a divine component. Obviously, there's a life component. But my guess is some of where his wisdom came from is when he was a kid and he said, Dad, tell me the story again about how you became king, about how you ran from Saul, how you lived in a cave, and how you cut a little thing off his garment. Tell me about your friend Jonathan.

And here's what Solomon writes in verse 24 of Chapter 18 "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Now, who's Solomon referring to here? Is he saying there's a friend like my dad had - Jonathan who sticks closer than a brother? Maybe.

But what we know is David wrote a lot of the Psalms. And one of the Psalms he wrote is one of the best-known, Psalm 23, where he says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Why? Because I know that there's a God who loves me.

And one of the things that I believe happened in David's lament is that he came to say, there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother. I have someone that I can walk with who will never let me down throughout the days of my life. And then the story is concluded at least of Jonathan and David in second Samuel nine, which is the story of David and Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son. He had special needs. But what was customary when somebody would come to power in those days is that they would kill all the relatives of the people who were related to the previous power because it would eliminate any rightful claim to the throne. So, it would have been customary for David to have said, who's related to Jonathan and Saul? Let's have them eliminated.

Here's what we read. Verse seven says, "'Don't be afraid,' David said to him, 'for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.'" And we're told in the text that what happened was that the Mephibosheth ate at the king's table for the rest of the days of his life, and David cared for him.

And what you see here is he moved from his lament to an investment. And what happens for some of us is we get stuck in lament and we never move to an investment to say what's next? I saw this for myself in a first-world kind of way recently.

So, several years ago, I splurged on a weather app. It was, I think \$2.99, and I bought this weather app called Dark Skies. And Dark Sky, I didn't realize had become a daily companion for me. I would hit the little thing and it would tell me when and how much precipitation would be, and what the weather was. It was just simple, easy, and no big deal. You hit it.

Evidently, I would go to it almost every day to see the weather. And then Apple bought it and they discontinued it. Evil Apple. That's not in the Bible, by the way. That's me. And so, they discontinued the app. It ended at the beginning of the year. I am trying all these new weather apps to say what's going to give me my information?

But here's the issue. The more I lament the loss of Dark Skies, the longer it will be before I'll develop a relationship with the new weather app. Now that's a goofy example, but maybe, just maybe, the loss of the friendship is the turning of a page in your life, my life, at times that says instead of saying who will be my companion, who will feed into me, who can I feed my life into?

You see, in a sense, Jonathan mediated the love of God in David's life, and then David mediated the love of God into Mephibosheth's life. And sometimes there's that opportunity. Now here's my guess. As I've talked about this, some of us are saying, well, okay, that's nice. You know, if I heard you, the loss of a friendship hurts. I should lament. I should invest. And God somehow helps me. I guess. Okay?

So, let me just try to bring this a little closer to where many of us live. I'm going to consult a modern expert on friendships and relationships and grief. Taylor Swift. So, Taylor Swift came out with a new album, if you even call it that anymore, called *Midnight*.

And it's a concept album and the concept is there are songs she wrote on 13 sleepless nights in her life where she's exploring her inner world, hurts, her desire for revenge, her need for love, and how she feels in different situations. Unless you think that I'm making too much of this, this album, if you want to call it an album, whatever it is, has been the most streamed work on Spotify in a single day ever.

Ten of the songs from this appeared simultaneously in the top ten slots on the hot 100 Billboard songs of the time. So, this is as close to the pulse of America as you can get right now. And it's not just girls who are 14 to 30 years old now. I had a hard time listening to it, but I did listen. I mean, the things I do for you people. I took a deep dive, but I actually found an article that helped me. The article was by a woman named Sarah Woodard, and it's called "Taylor Swift Can't be Saved by a Perfect Kiss."

Here's what Taylor Swift said about this concept album. She said, "We lie awake in love and fear, in turmoil and in tears. We stare at walls and drink until they speak out. We twist in our self-made cages and pray that we aren't – right this minute – about to make some fateful, life-altering mistake."

And then she wrote several songs, songs about revenge, finding love, and different things. But let me just give you the lyrics to two of the songs. In her song Mastermind, she writes this. "No one wanted to play with me as a little kid, so I've been scheming like a criminal ever since to make them love me and make it seem effortless. This is the first time I've felt the need to confess. And I swear. I'm only cryptic and Machiavellian 'cause I care."

Do you know why Taylor Swift's music is popular, in my opinion, and not just with one demographic? Because she expresses her vulnerability in lyrics that people can identify with. Whether you identify with this specifically or not, it's pretty crazy to think that Taylor Swift is saying, "Ever since I was a kid, I never felt like I fit in. I felt like no one wanted to play with me. And I always have to pretend in order to get people to like me." And what she's doing is crying out and saying, "I don't feel like I'm enough."

Here's another song, Mirrorball. She says, "I'm still on that tightrope... I've never been a natural. All I do is try, try, try. I'm still on the trapeze, I'm still trying everything." And then here's her line "To keep you looking at me." What does she want? She wants to be noticed. She wants to be adored.

Here's what Sarah Woodward concludes at the end of her article about Taylor Swift and this concept album. She says "What she really wants, like all of us, is one who will accept her as she is and expect nothing in return. In other words, she wants grace. At her most vulnerable, she can confess that, and well, grace extended from her lover, brings her peace and comfort. We've heard enough Taylor Swift music to know well how complicated love can be. As great as it might be, there is only one." And she capitalized, "as is the only one O-N-E who will never write a breakup song. A perfect kiss won't save Taylor Swift or any of the rest of us, but Grace from above surely can."

See Taylor Swift has probed the depths of what this world has to offer, and she keeps writing songs saying it isn't quite enough. I'm not quite enough. I need something else. But what if there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother?

Over Derek Kidner's concepts of friendship, he said constancy. What do you have in God? You have a God who says, I'll never leave you or forsake you. What do you have

in God? You have candor where He says, "You're so sinful that you need a savior." But you have counsel that says, "Come to me because my son has made a way for you."

What else do you have? You have consideration where he says, "I love you as you are." And the reason that this is freeing and foundational is because when you can say, I have a friend in Jesus, not just friends and people, then you don't put so much weight on your human friendships that you crush them with expectation and you demand from them something they can't give you. What it allows you to do, what it allows me to do is to receive friendship as a gift and to give friendship as a gift. Because we have a foundation with a God who has seen us in every way and loves us.

Now, that doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt when you lose a human friend and that there isn't a need to say, hey, I need to lament the loss. It doesn't mean that there's not a need to pivot and invest in something that's different in the future. But what it means is those aren't just coping mechanisms to help you do better, but they point you to say, if the Lord is my shepherd, I don't have anything else that I want. I have what I truly need. And that is where we will find some hope in the pain of a lost friendship.

Just bow your head for a moment. Close your eyes. Let me just ask you if you're here and you've experienced the loss of a friendship that maybe right now, quietly where you are, you just want to lament it, to say, God, I haven't really grieved this loss. Maybe just for a moment you just say, God, this hurts. But I know you care more than I even understand. Maybe this is a moment just to say, as hard as that has been, I'm going to keep investing and trying to mediate the love of God in other situations.

Or maybe you're here today and God hasn't really been a thing for you. Faith has been kind of an abstract concept, but what the Bible teaches very clearly is that God is a friend of sinners. What that means is when you acknowledge that God created you and you haven't lived up to his standard or probably your own standard that Jesus went to the cross having lived a perfect life and died on your behalf. When you put faith and trust in him that you then become a friend of God. The scriptures say that He will never then leave you or forsake you.

So today, if you haven't thought that God addressed your friendships, you can know that you can have a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Maybe this is your day just to say, God, I trust you. Trust what Jesus did. I know I haven't lived up to it, to your standard or even my own. You can enter into that kind of a friendship.

God, I thank you for the friends that many of us have had for years that have been great friends. But God, I also just pray for those of us who have walked through losses

in this area. And I pray that we would foundationally learn how to turn towards you for what it is we really need so that we can give and receive friendship as a gift. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great day.