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2 Samuel 15

“Seven Signs of a True Friend”

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In this teaching, we are introduced to Ahithophel and Hushai, two of David’s long-time friends and advisors. When Absalom, led a revolt against his father, David, and tried to become king, Ahithophel joined the rebellion, but Hushai remained loyal to David. In this study Pastor Gary shares a biblical perspective on the qualities and characteristics of what it means to be a true friend.

Historical Background

1. **2 Samuel 15:10-12** - *“Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, ‘As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, “Absalom is king in Hebron.” Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom’s following kept on increasing.”*
2. **2 Samuel 15:31-37** - *“Now David had been told, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ So David prayed, ‘O Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.’ When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, ‘If you go with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, “I will be your servant, O king; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,” then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel’s advice. Won’t the priests Zadok and Abiathar be there with you? Tell them anything you hear in the king’s palace. Their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there*

with them. Send them to me with anything you hear.’ So David’s friend Hushai arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city.”

3. As the story unfolds, we read that when Ahithophel joined Absalom’s revolt, David fled Jerusalem, and as he crossed the Mount of Olives, his other long-time friend, Hushai, met him.
4. David asked Hushai to pretend to join Absalom’s revolt, and in so doing, he became a spy on David’s behalf.
5. The account of the counsel of Hushai and Ahithophel is given in [2 Samuel 16:15–17:14](#).
6. [2 Samuel 17:23](#) – *“When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.”*
7. David wrote about the betrayal of an unnamed friend in several Psalms, and most Bible scholars believe these are references to Ahithophel.
 - a. [Psalm 55:12–14](#) – *“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.”*
 - b. [Psalm 41:9](#) – *“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”*
 - i. In [John 13:18](#), we read that Jesus quoted this verse in reference to Judas.
8. There are several parallels between Ahithophel and Judas, including:
 - a. Ahithophel was a personal friend of David, and Judas was a personal friend of Jesus.
 - b. Ahithophel conspired against his friend, and Judas conspired against his friend, Jesus.
 - c. David wept on the Mount of Olives, and Jesus wept on the Mount of Olives, too.
 - d. Ahithophel joined a losing cause, and Judas also joined a losing cause.
 - e. Ahithophel hanged himself, and Judas also hanged himself.
9. The one major difference is that Jesus hadn’t done anything that would invite the betrayal of a friend, but David did.

10. When you take a closer look at the “players” in this account reveals that Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, and Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, which makes Bathsheba, the granddaughter of Ahithophel!
11. When you understand the connection, it becomes clear that David's sin against Ahithophel's granddaughter became personal for Ahithophel.
12. Its no wonder Ahithophel's advice to Absalom during the revolt was, “Why don't you take your father's concubines and pitch a tent on the roof of the palace and sleep with them in the sight of all Israel” or another way of saying it would be: “Why don't you do the vile thing your father did with my granddaughter and return the shame!”
13. David's true friend in all of this mess was Hushai, of whom little is known, save that he was an Arkite.¹
14. The one thing we do know about Hushai is that he was a true friend to David.
15. Friends are important, and true friends are rare.²
16. A study by psychologists reported in the *Journal PLOS Medicine*³ revealed:
 - a. A circle of close friends and strong family ties can boost a person's health more than exercise, losing weight or quitting cigarettes and alcohol.
 - b. Psychologists reviewed 148 studies, which tracked the social interactions and health of 308, 849 people over an average of 7 ½ years, and from these studies they calculated the way death rates varied depending on how sociable a person was.
 - i. Being lonely and isolated was as bad for a person's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being an alcoholic.
 - ii. Being lonely or isolated was as harmful as not exercising, and was twice as bad for a person's health as being obese.

Seven Biblical Qualities Of A True Friend

#1 - A True Friend Is There In A Crisis

17. **Job 2:11-13** - *“When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go*

¹ The Arkite's inhabited territory west of Bethel.

² The Bible uses the word, friend or friendship, 178 times.

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/jul/27/friendship-relationships-good-health-study>

and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."

- a. Job's friends followed an ancient practice called "sitting Shiva."
 - i. Shiva is the Hebrew word for, seven.
 - ii. They just sat there with Job for seven days, without saying one word!
 - iii. Their only desire was to be there for their friend in his time of need.
18. Being there in a time of need is something a true friend does, because they want to minister in times of crisis, not to offer advice or theorize about the reasons for the crisis.
19. A true friend just wants to be there, plain and simple.
20. "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt." - Abraham Lincoln

#2 - A True Friend Is Loving

21. **Proverbs 17:17** - *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*
22. A true friend doesn't just love in the good times, they also love in the bad times, too, and their desire is to be there through thick and thin.
23. It's in times of adversity that a friend becomes like a brother!

#3 - A True Friend Confronts

24. **Proverbs 27:5-6** - *"Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."*
25. A true friend will say the hard thing, because, after all, if they won't, who will?
26. Hearing the "hard thing" from a friend may hurt, but when that kind of a message comes from a friend, that's the time when those kinds of wounds bring healing.

27. A true friend is not only willing to say the hard thing; a true friend is willing to hear the hard thing.

#4 - A True Friend Keeps A Confidence

28. **Proverbs 11:13** - *"A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."*

29. **Proverbs 17:9** - *"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."*

30. "Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence." - George Washington

#5 - A True Friend Lifts Up The Fallen

31. **Ecclesiastes 4:10** - *"If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"*

32. Obviously this verse is not just literal; it's also spiritual.

33. When someone falls morally or falls in their marriage or falls in their faith, a true friend will be there to help them.

#6 - A True Friend Is Willing To Make Sacrifices

34. **John 15:13** - *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."*

35. In the context of this verse, Jesus spoke this about himself, because he was pointing to his death on the cross, which was a sacrifice of laying down his life for you and me.

36. Even though we may never be called upon to literally lay down our life for a friend, we need to remember that the ultimate expression of love is sacrifice.

37. True friendships will cost us something, because they are not built on convenience, but sacrifice.

- a. We may have to go out of our way to be a true friend.
- b. We may have to give up something to be a true friend.

- c. We may have to do something that will cost us time or money, in order to be a true friend, but that's what true friends do for one another.

#7 - A True Friend Forgives

38. [Luke 17:3-4](#) - "... 'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent," forgive him.' "
39. If you are friends with someone long enough, you are bound to say or do something that offends, but unlike fair-weather friends, a true friend will forgive.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Samuel 16:16-17:14](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the qualities you look for in a friend?
4. Read and discuss [Psalm 41:9](#) and [Psalm 55:12-14](#).
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when a close friend betrayed them or they betrayed a close friend.
 - b. How did you or the other person "invite" the betrayal?
5. Spend time talking about the parallels between Ahithophel and Judas. (See #8 above)
6. What are some of the ways you've supported a friend when they found themselves in a time of crisis? (See #17 - #20 above)
7. Would you say you've been a true friend to others in the good times and the bad times or do you find that you are "missing in action" when your friends experience bad times? (See #21 - #23 above)
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when a true friend has confronted him or her. (See #24 - #27 above)
9. Read and discuss [Proverbs 11:13](#) and [Proverbs 17:9](#).

10. Spend time talking about ways the people in your group have been a true friend to others who have fallen morally or in their marriage or in their faith, etc.
11. Read and discuss [John 15:13](#).
 - a. Prepare an overview of the account of Thomas Vander Woude, a man known for sacrifice, who died to save his son.⁴
 - i. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts about the love and sacrifice of this father for his son.
12. Read and discuss [Luke 17:3-4](#).
 - a. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most Christ-like, how would you rate yourself when it comes to forgiving others who have offended you?
 - b. Do you think about Jesus' words, when he was on the cross, when you think about whether or not you will forgive someone?
 - c. By the way, when they were *killling him*, Jesus asked his Heavenly Father to forgive, because those who were involved had no idea what they were doing!
 - d. When you think about that level of forgiveness, does it make it easier for you to forgive others?
 - e. Read and discuss [Romans 12:18](#).
13. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: purpose in their heart to allow the Spirit to make them more Christ-like; follow the leading of the Spirit to go to those you've offended, to ask for their forgiveness; make a conscious decision to model the seven qualities of a true friend.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁴ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/09/AR2008090903691_pf.html