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## **Friendship Discernment**

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The relationship between David and Jonathan might be the most special one recorded in the Bible. They mutually supported one another in the most difficult of times. David said of his great friend, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26).

As long as Saul was king, it didn't really matter how successful David had been in battle, the army would have supported Saul. In movies there are heroic scenes where soldiers turn on their own corrupt commander and arrest him for his crimes, but that is only in the movies. In the kingdom of Israel, Saul was the power and authority, not David, the giant killer. When you consider David's adult life, the only human who showed David the constant strength of friendship when it was most needed was Jonathan. Other than God above, Jonathan was David's only genuine, unfailing ally.

There will come a time in our lives when we feel truly alone. At those moments, there is nothing better than one who would stand by our side and with hand on our shoulders, walk with us through thick and thin. We need understanding when the world does not understand us. We need warmth when the world is cold and uncaring. We need good humor when our backs are against the wall. Frankly, there are times when we just need someone who will say, "Everything is going to be fine!"

Every person should carefully test their friends and friendships. If you find that they lack fundamental virtue and basic principles of righteousness, you should be very careful not to fellowship with them (Proverbs 18:24).

In trying to find righteous friends, remember that character shows itself quickly and definitively. Real friends exist for several reasons:

**Real friends are for sharing (Hebrews 13:16).** Real friends are not going to take and take and take. They are going to help in time of need.

**Real friends are for encouragement (Hebrews 10:23-24).** We greatly benefit from our friends who encourage and edify us.

**Real friends are for spiritual support (James 5:16).** Real friends have no trouble approaching God's throne in behalf of a friend.

**Real friends are for serving (1 Thessalonians 2:6-8).** The Thessalonians worked for each other's mutual benefit.

**Real friends are for rebuking (2 Timothy 4:2).** Real friends have no trouble having a "You are the man!" moment to move their friends to repentance.

Someone has said that God divided man into men, so that they might enjoy the friendship of each other. The social principle of friendship is the chief channel through which the forces of good and evil influence our lives. Therefore, you had better be careful about the friends which you have and those with whom you associate. The Bible reveals wonderful examples of good friendships: Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Use these examples and find good friends who will spiritually assist you get to heaven (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; John 15:14-15).