

Conversation Starters

- What made your high moment over the last week? What was your low?

Discuss

Jonathan was the son of King Saul, which means he was next in line to be the king of Israel. But he was also best friends with David, who God had anointed as king because of Saul's sinful rule and behavior. Here's a comparison between Jonathan and David:

| Jonathan | David |
|--|--|
| Commander in army | Commander in army |
| Loved by troops | MORE Loved by troops |
| Singlehandedly inspired a victory | Singlehandedly inspired a victory |
| Famous for victories against Philistines | MORE Famous for victories against the Philistines |
| Lived in court | Lived in court |
| Son of king | Son in law of king |
| Next in line for Throne | Anointed by God to take the throne from Saul's family. |

Jonathan's tipping point comes in 1 Samuel 18:1-4:

¹ "After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David.² From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home.³ And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. ⁴ Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt."

That doesn't seem like a big deal unless you understand the gravity of Jonathan's gift. It wasn't just a robe and some weapons. Those gifts, particularly the robe, were symbolic of Jonathan's power, his role as heir to the throne. Giving them to David was symbolic of Jonathan giving up his claim to the throne, transferring his position of heir to the throne to David. This gift not only expressed love and loyalty to David, it also showed his submission to David's rise to prominence at the detriment of Jonathan.

Everyone in the kingdom knew exactly what he was doing. A few chapters later his father, the king, said to him,

³⁰ "You stupid son of a whore!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want [David] to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?" ³¹ As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!" (1 Samuel 20:30-31 NLT)

Saul knew as long as David survived that Jonathan would fade into obscurity.

- Could you have made the same decision Jonathan did? Why or why not?

There are two big barriers to making decisions like Jonathan where we lay ourselves down and care more about the needs and wants of others: ego and envy.

In Mark 12:30-31 Jesus calls us to lay down our ego and to focus on him first and our neighbors second:

³⁰ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' ³¹ The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

Philippians 2:3-4 calls us to do the same:

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

- When something bad happens to someone you don't particularly like, do you revel in their misfortune? Do you always have to have the last word? Are you always arguing that you're right? If the answer is yes to any of these kinds of questions, it's time to take Jesus' words seriously and lay down our own selfish desires.

It helps to compare Jesus' hierarchy of ego with our own:

| Ego in God's Kingdom | Ego in Our Kingdom |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. God | 1. Self |
| 2. Others | 2. Others |
| 3. Self | 3. God |

- Which hierarchy do you live according to when you're at work, at home with your family, at a park, and living life?

- What are some ways you can partner with God to turn our natural hierarchy upside down and start thinking about God first, others second, and yourself last?

Ego is your enemy, but so is envy. Envy is so destructive that God included it in the Ten Commandments:

"You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17 NLT).

Envy is wanting something someone else because they have it and you don't. It's easy to think we don't envy until we consider how many times we've wanted a new phone, watch, car, or something else simply because someone else has it. You know envy has your heart when your friend or spouse gets a promotion or experiences some other kind of blessing and instead of being happy for them you're resentful that they experienced it and not you.

- Why is envy so destructive?
- What can you do to root envy out of your heart? What *can't* you do? Can God do those things?

Next Steps

- What one step do you need to take this week to root ego and envy out of your life?
- What are some actions you can take this week to treat your family, coworkers, or friends as more important than yourself?

Pray

Father, thank you for sending Jesus to model to us a life without ego and envy, a life marked by laying his life down for others. Please make us into people that look more like Jesus and that reflect his priorities.