

# Story of Jonathan

*1 Samuel 13:23–14:52*



## bible verse

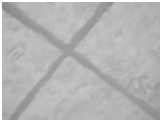
Committing to memory

### **Proverbs 12:19**

Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.



*December 19, 2010*



## story lesson

Bible story

Saul's dynasty was just rejected because of his repetitive disobedience. King Saul would no longer have any sons who would sit on the throne of Israel. Too bad, because Jonathan was brave, loyal, and seemingly worthy of being a king:

Jonathan and his armor bearer sneak off to scout out a Philistine outpost, but they did not tell king and father, Saul. Saul had about six hundred men around him, so no one was aware that Jonathan had left. Jonathan and his armor bearer approached the outpost and discovered there were cliffs on both sides—Bozez and Seneh.



Jonathan says: "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). So Jonathan lays down the challenge with his armor bearer: "If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands" (1 Samuel 14:9-10). In other words, if the Philistines tell them to wait, the Lord hasn't given them into their hands, but if they tell them to come up, then the Lord has given them into their hands.



So, they showed themselves to the Philistines and they goaded the two young Hebrew lads to come up to them and they would teach them a lesson. With a smile, Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel" (1 Samuel 14:12). And so the Philistines fell before Jonathan and armor bearer. All told, they "killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre" (1 Samuel 14:14).



As a result, panic struck the whole army of the Philistines—"it was a panic sent by God" (1 Samuel 14:15). Saul's lookouts reported what they saw and wondered what happened. They discovered that Jonathan was missing and figured he had caused or started something. Saul and his men assembled and went to meet the Philistines—who were "in total confusion, striking each other with their swords" (1 Samuel 14:20). The Israelites pursued the Philistines and "so the Lord rescued Israel that day" (1 Samuel 14:23).



Meanwhile, the men of Israel were really quite famished and tired because of an oath King Saul had bound the people to: "'Cursed be any man who eats food before evening comes, before I have avenged myself on my enemies!' So none of the troops had food" (1 Samuel 14:24).

As the army was traveling they saw some honey on the ground, but did not partake of the good blessing because they were all afraid of Saul's oath. However, Jonathan had not heard his father make the oath. So when he saw the honey, he was excited and indulged himself in the tasting of God's good blessing. Then a soldier told Jonathan what Saul had said. Jonathan thought that that was one of the most ridiculous things ever. Why would his dad do that? Wouldn't it have been better to allow the army to eat to garner some strength and endurance? See how much energy and vitality the honey gave to the weary?



Meanwhile, Saul has to get on to some of his troops for eating meat that still had blood in it. (If you will remember, according to the law of God found in Leviticus, it is not okay to eat meat with the blood still in it because blood is the life of an animal.) The men listened and obeyed, and Saul even had an altar built (the Bible says that this was the first time Saul had done that [cf.14:35]).

Saul inquired of the Lord as to whether or not he should proceed on after the Philistines by night and plunder them, but the Lord did not answer. Therefore Saul drew a line in



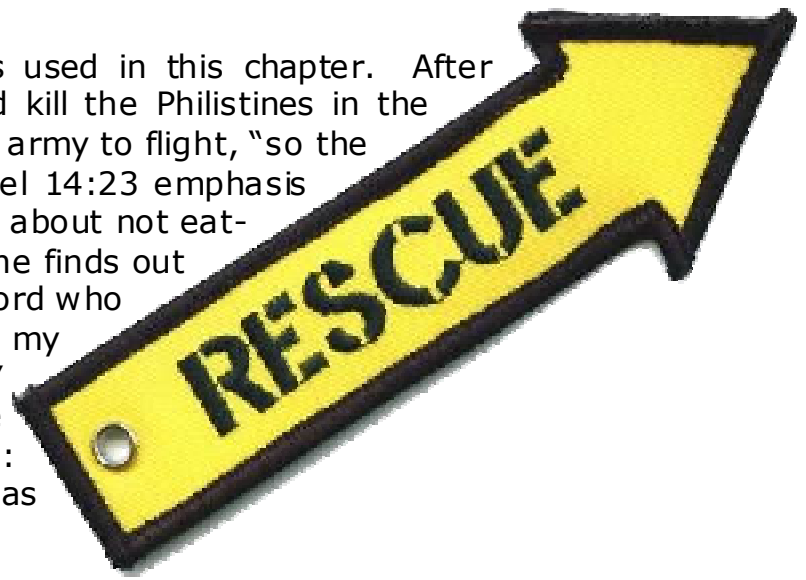
the sand to determine who had committed a sin. And Saul made another oath: "As surely as the Lord who rescues Israel lives, even if it lies with my son Jonathan, he must die" (1 Samuel 14:39). Uh-oh. You guessed it... Jonathan ended up being the one who had committed the sin.

Saul told Jonathan that he would have to die. However, the men said to Saul: "'Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! As surely as the Lord lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he did this today with God's help.' So the men rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death" (1 Samuel 14:45).

Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines and withdrew to his own land.



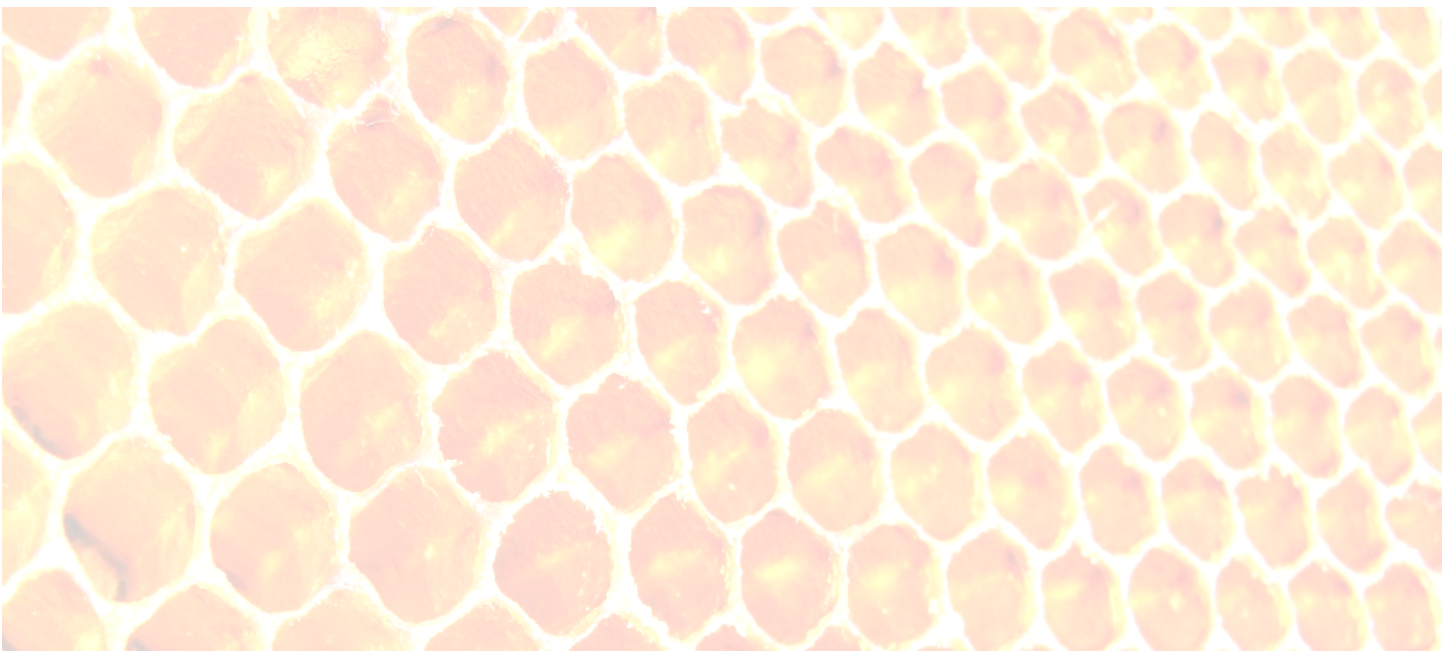
It is interesting how the word *rescue* is used in this chapter. After Jonathan and his armor bearer fight and kill the Philistines in the outpost and then put the whole Philistine army to flight, "so the Lord *rescued* Israel that day..." (1 Samuel 14:23 emphasis added). Then, after Saul makes his oath about not eating honey and makes another one when he finds out someone has sinned: "As surely as the Lord who *rescues* Israel lives, even if it lies with my on Jonathan, he must die" (1 Samuel 14:39). Finally, when the men save Jonathan from certain death: "So the men *rescued* Jonathan, and he was not put to death" (1 Samuel 14:45).



I wonder if this is a literary, linear progression of a turning away from God. We definitely see it in the actions of Saul and his disobedience and recalcitrant nature, but furthermore in the literary structure and framework of a text. Authors tend to use literary devices to clue us in to what is happening and to provide an undercover commentary on the events.

- How do we know if what Saul did was wrong?
- Was it wrong to make the oath?
- Was it wrong to enforce it once it was violated?
- Were Jonathan's actions really sinful?
- Was the army's *rescuing* of young Jonathan an okay thing, or a not-so-okay thing?

It is difficult to decipher what is really the point in all of this, however, when we pay attention to the details, like the strategic use of words and themes, then we can get an overall idea of what is really happening.





## life application

Making it real

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### **Let your yes be yes, and your no be no**

Usually when we say we are going to do something, we should do it. It is called integrity. Now, if it ends up being something bad, then we should probably not do it. Jesus suggest in the Sermon on the Mount that your yes should be yes and your no should be no. Why? Because you should be able to trust what the people of God say when they say it. It shows how God wants his special people to live and how his people are to show the world how to live. We are to model the true humanity.

### **Foolish Promises**

You do not need to make foolish promises. It isn't necessary. God does not require you to make promises all the time. Just be. Enjoy life and live. Obey. Walk with the Lord closely. Jesus also warned against swearing oaths. Why? Again, because Jesus wants us to be the model people for the sake of the world. He wants us to be careful what we say.



## questions

remembering

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- 1. Who snuck off with his armor bearer to a Philistine outpost?** Jonathan
- 2. Did Jonathan and the armor bearer win or lose against the Philistines?** Win
- 3. According to King Saul, what was the entire army not supposed to do before evening?** Eat anything
- 4. Without knowing he was violating his dad the king, what did Jonathan eat?**  
Honey
- 5. Who saved Jonathan from immediate death?** King Saul's army
- 6. Should we make promises we can't keep? Should we make promises we can keep?**



## coloring sheet

On the next page

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JONATHAN! YOUR FATHER  
COMMANDED WE CAN'T EAT  
TODAY!

YUM!  
HONEY!



Story of Jonathan