

# A Coaching Covenant

The candidate development team shares in the conviction that coaching is a critical component of the development process for missionary and vocational ministry candidates. We want to see people become effective workers for His harvest fields (Matt. 9:37-38). We desire to see people “get there” in service, and to get there well.

Consider the example of Jonathan serving as a coach for David (1 Samuel 18-23). Jonathan was the firstborn son of Saul, rightful heir of the throne, but He knew David was God’s chosen anointed for king. They made a covenant together. We would like to suggest their relationship as a great example of a coaching covenant.

Although we don’t see official acknowledgment of friendships in our world very often, the Bible’s example of David and Jonathan is one that encourages an established covenant between friends. Although the “covenant” language is not essential for our purposes, it might be the kind of relational agreement worthy of consideration. A covenant is a promise, a contract, an agreed upon formation of unity. Although a coaching covenant need not be a formal official agreement that is binding for life, we would like to suggest the following components in a relationship that will facilitate the coaching of workers for the harvest. A coaching covenant....what is involved?

**1. Coaching flows from the Great Commandment.** It’s about a covenant of Love. In 1 Samuel 18:3, Jonathan made a covenant with David, a commitment which flowed from love.

*“And Jonathan made a covenant with David **because he loved him as himself.**”*

Compare this with the Great Commandment of Matt 22:37-40:

*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'***



Love for God works itself out by love for others. To love God is to love what and whom He loves. His heart beats with compassion for lost, hurting, and helpless people (Matthew 9:35-38). When I come alongside workers who love God and love what He loves, helping them to become workers for His harvest fields, I am living a great commandment and a great commission lifestyle. The headwaters for pure rivers of ministry are found in the deep wells of great commandment love.

**2. Two essential aspects of a coaching covenant are LOVE and LOYALTY.**

In 1 Samuel 18:4, Jonathan extends to David gifts of royal clothing and instruments of war. This is symbolic of bonding, a display of face to face loyalty. Jonathan knew that David would one day be king, and he gives honor rooted in love. It is a display of loyal commitment to help David “get there.” This loyalty unfolds again later in 20:14-15....”*but show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord*” The Hebrew word for

*unfailing kindness* is *hesed*, meaning *love and loyalty*, two essential aspects of a covenant relationship bound up in one old testament word.

The rest of the story concerning David and Jonathan and their covenant is about how this loyalty is demonstrated:

- **Protection.** In 19:1-2, we see Jonathan giving warnings of impending danger. For Jonathan, in his coaching relationship with David, this is magnified as being more important than even blood family bonds! His love for David extends beyond any loyalties he felt toward King Saul, his father. This protecting, guarding another person's back, is an important part of coaching.

Sometimes loving loyalty in a coaching relationship is about warnings. "Stay away from that." "Avoid that person." Sometimes protective coaching involves confrontation.

Often, protective coaching means keeping secrets and maintaining confidence. In 20:18ff we see Jonathan checking things out in confidence, keeping a secret as to where David is. David was out hiding on the south side of a big stone. Sometimes the best service we can do is keep secrets with people as they wait in the field, sitting at the stone altar, allowing God our Rock to bring healing and refining.

Protecting can also mean covering for people whom we are coaching. It means speaking on their behalf, as Barnabas did for Paul (Acts 9:27ff) and as Jonathan does for David:

***"Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father"***

(1 Samuel 19:4a)

- **Commitment.** In 1 Samuel 20:4, Jonathan says something every ministry candidate should hear from someone at some time....*"Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."* That's commitment. Love and loyalty are about commitment. Although the people we are coaching must be the ones who do the work, they need to know that someone is there for them. As identified by Robert Logan<sup>1</sup>, there are 3 rules of coaching:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The person being coached does the work</li><li>2. The person being coached does the work.</li><li>3. The person being coached does the work.</li></ol> |
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However, David went forth into the field because he knew Jonathan was advocating on his behalf. Coaches encourage by commitment to be there and be available, whatever it takes.

**3. Coaching culminates in sending.** In 20:42, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan 3 times, with his face to the ground, indicating honor to a superior. They wept together, David the most, but there was a sharing in common bonds of emotion. Jonathan said to David, **"Go in peace,"** something generally said by a superior, firming up that Jonathan was a coach for David. At the same time, however, Jonathan uses

the emphatic “we” as a reminder of the covenant relationship between two friends. Then this chapter ends.....”*Then David left, and Jonathan went back to town.*”

In essence, David is sent forth into the next phase of his development. Jonathan goes back to where he was.

It wasn’t that they never met again. In 23:18, with David in the desert, knowing that Saul was out to kill him, Jonathan went to David and “*HELPED HIM FIND STRENGTH IN GOD.*” He said to David....”*Don’t be afraid*”. They remembered and renewed their covenant. The coach stepped into the picture once again for a moment, bringing strength and encouragement at a critical moment in the fields of ministry. However, once again, the text indicates that Jonathan went home, but David remained.

**Conclusion**.....Coaching is about long term impact, life-changing investment during a period of time in an emerging worker’s life.

By 2 Samuel 9, much has happened. There have been many battles, with both defeat and victory. Saul and Jonathan are now dead, killed in war. The text finds David remembering Jonathan. He misses Jonathan. He misses the friendship and remembers their covenant. He recalls the tremendous coaching impact Jonathan had on him.

We may not see immediate fruit in our coaching relationships. But it’s not about what we can see, it’s about joining God in the calling forth of workers for His harvest. It’s about loving God and loving what He loves. By Great Commandment coaching that is characterized by love and loyalty expressed in protection and commitment, culminated in sending forth, we are among the blessed.

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<sup>i</sup> *Coaching 101, Discover the Power of Coaching*, page 101