

High Yield Investments: The Kind of Friends We All Need:

Who's Your Nathan? You Need an Editor 2 Samuel 12:1-12

As most of you know, I spent the last two weeks of August taking Stephen and Suzanne to college. A number of you have also delivered your college age students to school in the past few weeks. Going to college is the start of journey for students. Getting the kids to school was more of a destination for me. My goal was to get them to college, get them settled and then to leave. But more than that, the trips were also about relationships. I got to spend a lot of time with my two youngest and really connect with them. They got to meet people they had met on Face Book and begin making new friends. My hope is that my kids get some great professors, make some good friendships and continue to remain connected with God.

Life is not just a destination and it is not just about the journey. Life is about relationships. Today, as we begin our series on "High Yield Investments," we will be focusing on the kind of friends we all need. God made a huge investment for us when He sent His Son into our world. Jesus tells us why he came when he said, "*I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*" (John 14:3) Jesus did everything necessary to prepare the way for us. He paid the debt that we could not repay. He opened the path to heaven. And He invites us to follow Him. He doesn't give us some magic formula to follow. He doesn't give us a set of principles or practices that we have to keep. He invites us to walk with Him in faith. He wants to connect us with God and with other people in God's family. Those are the kinds of friendships that we need that yield the highest results.

There are two commonly held myths that can keep up from connecting with God and His people. The first myth is "*I am a rock. I am an island.*" This myth says I don't need God or other people in my life, that I can make it on my own. But it doesn't work. We were not created to go it alone. We need other people in our lives. And we need God in our lives too. God made us to love Him because He first loves us and to love others as well. You can't make it on your own very long.

The second myth is that "*One person can meet all of my needs.*" That doesn't work either. One person can be very important to you. A spouse, a sibling or a close friend can help compliment and complete your life. But one person can't meet all of your needs. We need a variety of people in our lives. That is why for the next six weeks we are going to look at six of the friends that we need in our lives. This is not a complete list. You may have other types of people that you would add to your list. These six high yield relationships are all based on examples from the Bible.

We begin today with Nathan. We all need a Nathan. The word "Nathan" means gift. Nathan was God's gift to King David. He was a man who moved in and around the royal court. He had access to the king and the king listened to him. Nathan was the king's "editor." He wasn't constantly looking for fault, but a man who had his friend's best interest at heart. So when David

tried to hide his adultery and murder in the dark, Nathan was the man who parted the curtain to let the light in and expose David's sin so that he would see it and deal with it. Nathan didn't take David's sin to the press. He didn't sell David's secret to his enemies. He told David a story.

Listen to it again: (2 Samuel 12:1-4)

“There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”

This story got David's attention and he said that the man deserved to die. Then Nathan looked at his friend and said, **“You are the man!”** He told David the truth in love. Nathan called his friend back on the right path.

When I was in Southern California, I had the chance to return to Lake Arrowhead where I served as Pastor before coming to Peace. I stayed with some good friends that left the church some time after we moved away. They had a run in with one of the other members that didn't get resolved for a number of years. So they bounced from church to church, never really finding a new church home. Finally Gwen decided to go back to Mt. Calvary one Sunday while Don stayed home. It just so happened that Ruth sat down next to Gwen and welcomed her. Then she asked if it was her fault that Don had left the church. Gwen spoke the truth, in love and said yes. To make a long story short, Ruth called Don later that day and apologized for her actions. Gwen told Don that he had to talk with Ruth. Don and Gwen are back in the church. Ruth and Ron came to Don and Gwen's home for a barbecue the night I was there. Gwen was a Nathan to both Ruth and Don.

We all need a Nathan, the person who will get under our skin and expose the things that are wrong in our lives. The Nathan role is not easy, but necessary. Your Nathan may be your spouse, a classmate or a co-worker. Whoever your Nathan is, he or she is a close friend who has your best interest at heart. They don't do things to hurt us, but to help us.

Nathans are also the people who look us straight in the eye and ask us the tough questions. Sometimes their questions comfort us, “Is there anything too hard for God?” Other times their questions call us out, “Adam, where are you?” Their questions can convict us, “Peter, do you love me?” The questions are designed to make us think and to get us back on the right path.

Nathans also tell us the truth. Some people don't or won't tell us the truth. But the Nathans in our lives speak the truth in love. They follow the example of Christ who confronted sin when he saw it, but also forgave those who repented. We need people who will tell us the truth, who will warn

us when we are starting to get out of line, who will challenge us when we think we've gotten by with something. Detroit's Mayor Kilpatrick would have been much better off if he had a Nathan.

Whether you know it or not, you have at least one Nathan in your life. His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true friend who comes into our lives. He doesn't leave us in the tough times. He doesn't turn his back on us when we are going the wrong way. He doesn't condemn us; he shows us the right way. Then he tells us to sin no more, to stop going the wrong way and walk with him along the right path.

The bottom line is this, David needed Nathan. Nathan was so important to King David that he named one of his sons after him. (Luke 3:31) Nathan made a big difference in David's life. We all need a Nathan in our lives and we are all called to be a Nathan for others. Who is your Nathan? If you don't have a Nathan in your life, you need to find one. And don't forget that someone needs you to be a Nathan to them, too. Join us next week as we ask the question, "Who is your Jonathan?" Remember this, you need a true friend. Amen.