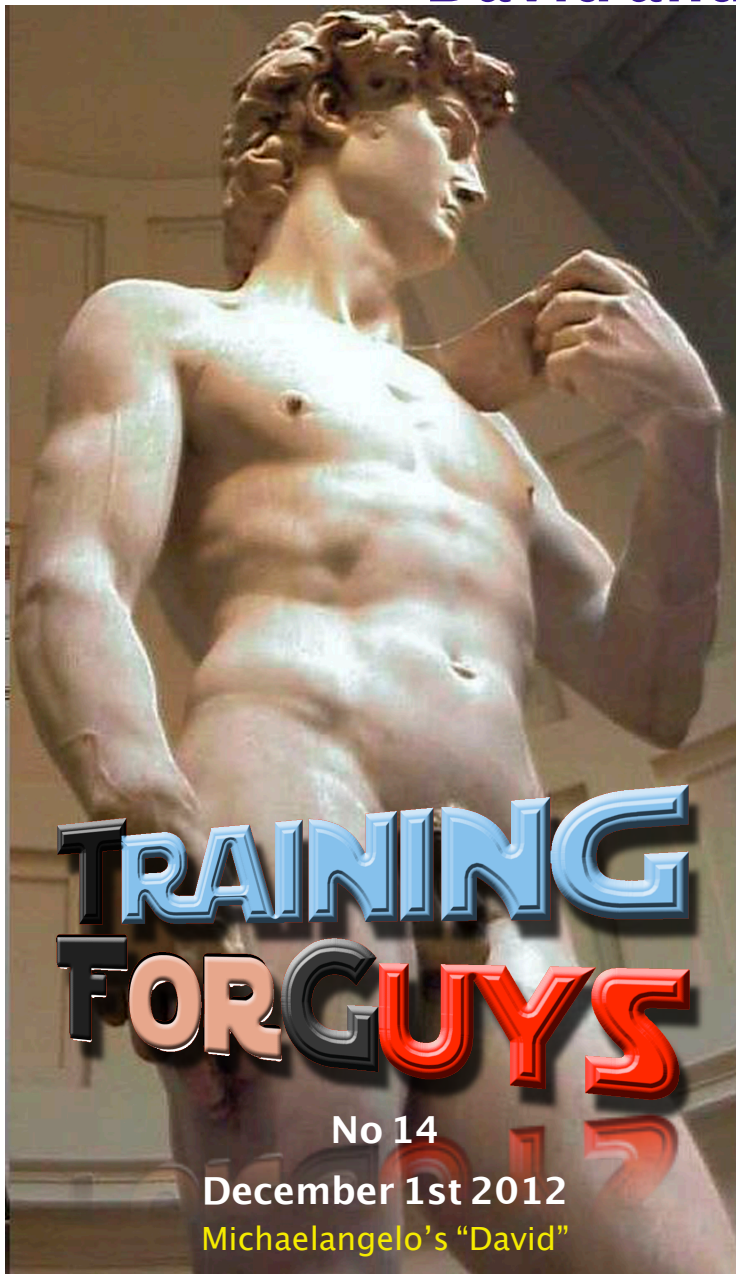


# David and Jonathan



Loads of blokes are scared to be intimate with other men. As general acceptance of homosexuality in society has become the norm, so too has the assumption that any intimacy between men must be a sign of homosexual desires, latent in the men displaying the intimacy.

But this is not only normally untrue, it is a sinister and sly ploy by Satan to break the power of men, united in love and passion together for the things of God.

In the Bible we read of David and Jonathan. These two men were clearly not homosexual... both had wives and families and in the case of David we read of lust leading to adultery and also several sexual partners in his later life. Yet we also read of a deeply passionate and affectionate relationship between them.

Turn to 1 Samuel 18v3. It says **Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.** Jonathan was the prince of Israel, heir to the throne of his father Saul. Yet we read **Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.** (v4). These were the things that marked Jonathan out as special... he gave them to David. Later, in chapter 20 when we discover that Saul is wanting to kill David Jonathan pledges his allegiance to David in preference to his father... and David promises life long devotion to Jonathan and his whole family..

In other male-male relationships in the Bible we see envy destroying lives: Cain envious of Abel,

Joseph's brothers despising him... but here there is none of that. David and Jonathan loved each other, embraced, kissed, and were devoted to each other.

David himself tells us in Psalm 133: 1 **how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.** I don't know, but I wonder if he was remembering the relationship with Jonathan when he wrote that?

**What does all this mean for us?** I don't think we see the level of commitment that Jonathan had for David (preferring him over himself) or David for Jonathan (looking after his remaining family after he was killed) much today. Our relationships can seem intense, but rarely go much below the surface. Surprisingly, it is often non-Christian men who have the deeper relationships, where they know each other very well. They sin together, and openly talk about the sins they commit. Though I'm not advocating it, getting drunk with your mates breaks down the barriers. They know about each other's sexual conquests, and so forth - and trust each other with such information.

Christians, however, rarely talk openly with each other about sin. We have developed a sub-culture in which we are seeking Jesus and holiness together and so are almost scared to admit the times we fall short of that holy ideal we urge each other to. There's nothing wrong with encouraging each other to holiness, of course... the Bible tells us to do it. But I believe we are missing out on the depth of unity we

could have if we don't have mates with whom we can be open and share our failings honestly as well as our strengths. If your friend knew that 2 pints of beer broke down your strength so that when you got home you couldn't stop yourself looking at porn on the internet they would stand with you to resist the extra drink rather than urging you to have it. But even more than that, they would know you better and be knit together with you more closely as you both share your innermost selves with each other.

Satan has weakened the Body of Christ by making many of us into islands, rather than the City of God. Or, to use a more usual biblical illustration, one man bands instead of a mighty army. Soldiers who fight together get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses and can both compensate for them and look out for each other more effectively.

We need to move away from being superficial with each other and develop strong bonds that are anchored in a depth of knowledge of the brothers God has put around us.

If you look at the sculpture of David on the first page you will see a hand on his shoulder which he is holding. I know that this sculpture is just a product of one person's imagination – but what I see as I look at that is a man standing unashamedly naked, and confident. Someone else is there with him and they are holding hands. The other person sees him as he is – warts and all (admittedly not many on this statue!) – and they can still have that intimacy. That picture of being comfortable with a fellow Christian mate when all the 'coverings' are off is the one I think we all need to be able to move towards.

It's not homosexual to be able to be devoted in this way to another man. It's part of God's plan to knit us together into an army. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 is often heard at weddings. But look at it closely and you will see it is about two men working or fighting together for the same cause. Two men, with God, as a three stranded cord.

As Christian men learn to be bonded together in love we will see Satan's strategy to destroy holy relationships being thwarted, and God's Kingdom advancing.

It's worth saying, to finish, that many marriages fail because even the husband and wife can't reach this level of honest openness with each other. It's a high calling, but it is vital for marriage and also our other major relationships.

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*illustrations this week sourced from the internet*

### Our Father, I dunno what this is all about, but...

#### Lead us not into temptation

Why do we need to pray this? Would God ever lead us into a place of temptation?

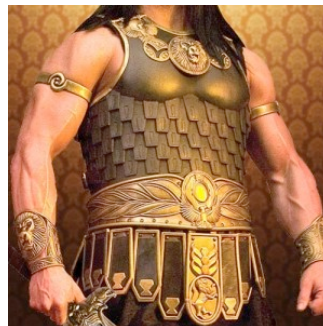
Well, that's where He led Jesus (Matthew 4:1) so there's no reason why He might not. If we replace the word **temptation** with the word **testing** it perhaps makes more sense to us.

Yet I think, again, that part of the reason Jesus taught us to pray this was to make us think about the choices we make ourselves.

If I pray 'lead me not into temptation' and yet choose to go to a porn shop what's going on? Surely part of the prayer is 'God, help me to make wise choices about where I go, what I look at, what I listen to?'

'Help me to recognise the things that are temptation for me, and then help me to **change my plans** or even my **lifestyle** so that I can avoid those temptations'.

Then the prayer becomes "Lord, help me to avoid the things I know that tempt me, and to learn to recognise new things as either helpful or unhelpful"



### The Breastplate of Righteousness

This week's Bible

Study, the second of

6 sideways looks at the

elements of the

Armour of God in

Ephesians 6

[www.tfg.org.uk/podcasts](http://www.tfg.org.uk/podcasts)

you may have noticed that I haven't featured a 'Man of the Week' recently. I've not given up on the idea, but was getting depressed that so many times the main man in the news had been there for bad reasons. Anyone like to nominate a Man of the Year who has achieved something positive in 2012?

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A mosque is a sort of church. The main difference is that its roof is doomed.