

The saying “blood is thicker than water” originated as a way to prioritize the bonds of kinship over friendship. But Solomon, as evidenced by Proverbs 18:24, might have begged to differ. He may have been drawing on the experience of his own father, David.

David was the youngest of eight brothers, and was anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul as king of Israel. (1 Samuel 16) But when David arrived at the camp of Israel’s army, his brothers treated him with disdain and ridicule. (1 Samuel 17) Ironically, it was Saul’s own son Jonathan who became David’s best friend, protecting him from the attacks of Saul. (1 Samuel 18) When Saul devised a plan to kill David, it was Jonathan who saved him. Jonathan’s words to David exemplify the words of a true friend: “Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you.” (1 Samuel 20:4) David never heard similar words of loyalty from his own brothers. This experience may have inspired Solomon to write that there “is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”, namely Jesus.

Solomon also suggested that to have such a friend, one must be such a friend.

Proverbs 18:24 “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”