

Text: John 15:12-17

Title: "Balancing Act"

Introduction: Do you all remember being in grade school and hanging out with your best friends during recess. Back in the day, we used to walk around the playground with our arms around each other ... we were tight! We played football together, kickball together, basketball together, baseball together, irritated the teacher together, etc.

How many of those close friends are you still close to today? How many of them are you no longer in touch with? How many of them did you leave behind when you went on to Jr. High and High School? Why did you break off those friendships?!? Let me ask you this ... how many "best buddies" have you hurt in your lifetime?!?

Are there any of those friendships that you wish that you had hung on to? Are there any friendships today that you would like to re-kindle?

Let's Pray!

If you haven't already, please take the insert out of your program. You will see our Scripture for today and an outline of how we are approaching this Scripture and the subject of "Ships". After worship today, please take this insert home with you and put it somewhere where you will be reminded this week of what we've learned from God. For those of you who are listening online or IPODing, you too can download the outline off of our website and fill in the blanks!

So we are into this series called "Ships" and we are talking about relationships. Relationships take up so much of our lives ... even if we are introverts, it's relationships that drive us and keep us up at night and make us happy, mad, glad, sad and unruly! Our emotional lives and our dreams and our hopes in this life are interconnected with all sorts of relationships.

The past two weeks we started off this series talking out "Lordship relationship"; our relationship with God. I'm arguing that it's going to be really hard to carry out any sort of human to human relationship without first figuring out what it takes to be in relationship with the One who created relationships...

So, brief recap, in order to be in relationship with God, we've got to move. God said that if we 1st get close to God, God will get close to us. Jesus said that He (Triune God) would be with us "to the end of the age / time". The problem is that God is usually right with us, but is just outside of our comfort zone. In order to be with God, we have to go in the direction that God is going.

Do you remember from last week who God leads us toward? *The least and the lost* are those who are hungry and thirsty and unclothed and unclean and are sick or in prison. When we go toward those people, God is with us. Jesus plan for ministry was to take care of people's basic needs (food, healing, teaching that changes lives and bringing people back to life, etc.), and once those people trusted Jesus, Jesus would introduce them to His Father.

First, let's take care of your needs today, then let's get God's Eyes and start caring for their eternal needs.

Well, that brings us to our next ‘ship ... FRIENDSHIP! Now, most of us don’t really connect friendship with church stuff ... “Why are we talking about friendships?” It makes sense to talk about our relationship with God in church. And in a couple of weeks when we start talking about courtship and marriage-ship, that’s stuff we need to talk about in church, but, FRIENDSHIP?!?

Friendships are very important to us. Again, really hard to balance at times ... and I suffer just like you do. Back to “You sank my battleship!” It’s hard to keep them all afloat at times, isn’t it? If you want to know how important friendships are, check out “Facebook”. *How many of you are on Facebook?*

Did you know that Facebook now has around 400 million citizens? Do you know how many citizens there are in the U.S.? 300 million! There are more people on Facebook than live in the U.S.!

For those of you who are on Facebook that are my age or older, I just want you to be aware that the generations younger than us are just creeped out by that. Just know that your kids might reject your friend request.

I’m really terrible at Facebook ... never take the time. I have friend requests sitting (if it’s any of you, I’m not being a jerk; I just don’t spend much time on it!) in my box that I never get to... I DO LIKE GETTING TO PICK MY FRIENDS THOUGH!

Anyone here know how many friends you have according to Facebook?!? Let’s see who has the most... COOL! Now I’m going to pick on you.

There are so many people that we put under the label of “Friendship” ... relatives, co-workers, neighbors, classmates, teammates, acquaintances, etc. We are in so many types of relationships and at so many levels. There are a number of ways that we sink our ‘ships / relationships, and we are going to talk about a few of those today...

The first way is:

I. Trying to Have Friends without Being a Friend

- A. We all know that we need friends, right?!? It would be very hard to go through this life without someone you can trust and rely on.
- B. The problem comes when we lose sight of the need for good friends and just look at accumulating more friends ... it goes away from being good, solid relationships where you can really talk and help each other get better. It turns into a competition. We just want to build our list...
- C. Maybe it’s our insecurities or we’ve been told that something is wrong with us and we are looking for something to serve us and make us feel better about ourselves. “If I have a lot of friends, I must be okay!”
 1. So, we go into “friends list mode” and we become, instead of friends; consumer/product. “I want you to be my friend so I can add you to my list so that I feel better about myself.” “I want you to be my friend, because a lot of people like you and if they like you maybe they will like me and then I will be okay and feel better about myself.” That’s not friendship – that’s using people!
 2. If one friend is good than two friends is great and three friends is better, etc. If our ego rises and falls on the number of friends we have on Facebook or face-to-face, that’s a problem for our FRIEND Ships!

3. We become addicted to gaining friends and we are so set on **AQUIRING** friends that we forget or don't know how to **BE A FRIEND**. Then, we wonder if we are still okay ... if those friends are not making you feel good, you might need some new friends, right?!?
- D. We might be trying so hard to have friends that we don't take time to learn how to **BE A FRIEND**!
- E. What happens is that we are so set on having friends, that if the friendship is working (makes you feel better about you or raises your status with others...), you will not do anything to jepordize that friendship.
1. You will not say what needs to be said to that friend to keep them from harm.
 2. You will not have those deep conversations that will help both of you be better people, because you're afraid that you will lose one off of your list!
 3. That's not friendship. That's using other people.
- F. On the other side of that coin, if you are in a friendship that is not giving you what you want (status, self-confidence, assurance, etc.), you are probably not going to invest in that relationship to keep it going ... you are not going to **BE A FRIEND**. We let those people drop!
- G. Another problem with "Having Friends Without Being a Friend" is that it doesn't look anything like Jesus. Let me share with you some stuff that Jesus said to his friends (disciples = not just hanging out on the weekends, but they lived together and ministered together and ate together ... did everything together for three years). They had been together for about three years at this point in the story according to John. Jesus is getting ready to head to the cross and he knows that things aren't going to be pretty over the next few days/weeks. So, Jesus gives them some important words from John 15... **READ JOHN 15:12-17 NOW!**
- H. Jesus says that **REAL FRIENDSHIP** is not when you take and take and take and work another person over as your "staff", but, **REAL FRIENDSHIP** is when you give and give and give even up to the point of giving your life for them.
1. Jesus did just that a few days later ... Jesus did not just lay down his life for some Jewish fishermen and tax collectors in the 1st Century, but for us too. We are His friends because He died for us!
 2. If you and I are in the habit of just 'having' friends, it's probably the exact opposite of what Jesus is calling us to!
 3. That takes us to our 2nd problem with Friendships!

II. Trying to Be a Friend without Having Friends

- A. This is the person who will just give and give and give to other people because they love being needed. They don't put up any boundaries about what they will and won't do for the people around them.
- B. This is the person who will be there every time you call on them no matter what your circumstances are or no matter what their circumstances are. (BTW = this is all of us from time to time...)
- C. This person is not only there for you no matter what, they may be setting up situations for you to need them. We steer others to need us more and more.
1. Now, I understand that we all have a need to be needed.
 2. It gives us purpose in life, but we can take it too far.
 3. If we go this far, it has now become a disguise for problem #1 ... This helps us have friends by making sure we always have people who need us. If people need us, they will have us near them and we will never be ALONE!
 4. Only, there is nothing lonelier than this, because we know deep down that this is not friendship ... it's product/user again. We are allowing ourselves to be used in hopes that it will make us feel better about ourselves... OUCH!
 5. When we allow ourselves to be a doormat, we don't experience real back and forth love like Jesus talked about, loving others selflessly and letting other people love you ... when we allow others to use us, we actually lose our self-worth and don't want to hear that God really loves us ... we've gone down too far to hear that anyone loves us...
 6. What happens when you realize that you cannot meet the needs of your friends? Again, you are alone.
- D. We need friends, right? Did you know that even Jesus needed friends? Let's look at Matthew 26 where Jesus death is within hours and he reaches out to the Disciples because He knows he needs a friend... Listen to **Matthew 26:36-41**.
1. Even Jesus, probably a little more emotionally healthy than we are, knew that in those tough times, he needed his friends.
 2. Even though He knew that they would probably let Him down, Jesus still invites them to be close in tough times.
 3. If Jesus knows that trying to be a friend without having friends is hopeless, than maybe we should figure that out too.
 4. Hopefully we are not so locked into our need to be needed that we forget that we need friends...
 5. I hope that we can discover real loving friendships that are healthy and productive and help both parties be better.
- E. Well, now this is turning into some sort of BALANCING ACT isn't it? If we lean too far one way we are going to be the person who is trying to "Have Friends without Being a Friend" and if we lean too far the other way we will be the person who is trying to "Be a Friend without Having Friends".

F. How are we going to keep this straight? Next problem:

III. Trying to be a Friend Like Jesus without experiencing Friendship with Jesus

A. First things first...

B.

IV. Friendship with Direction

A. Shalom! "Who is my mother, who are my brothers, but these that I grow in my relationship with God with?!"

B.