

**Intro:** We live in an age where communication more accessible and rapid than any point in human history. We've come a long way from carrier pigeons. Most of you are expert consumers of social media. Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinetrest, and the one at the top of most every list, Facebook.

How many Facebook users do we have here this am? Holla at me! ☺ And don't get me confused with a Canadian kid that plays hockey. I ain't gonna lie. I was a little taken back when I found out there was another T. Turl roaming the earth. smh . . . It was good for my humility. ☺

Now, if you use Facebook. You are in good company. There are over 1.3Billion active monthly users. Five new profiles are created every second. Wow! Those 1.3 Billion monthly users generate 4.5 Billion daily "likes."

Facebook is driven by the concept of friendship. You connect with people in your social networks and "friend" them in order to exchange messages, view posts, pictures, videos, etc, etc. Now here is the irony. For many people, their Facebook "friends" would really be more accurately defined as acquaintances or companions. In fact, I don't know about you, but I have some "friends" on Facebook that are really absolute strangers. How ironic? Some people might even admit that some of their "friends" on Facebook are currently considered their "enemies."

All of this calls into question what friendship really is? How should we define friendship? What is characteristic of true friendship.

Friendship is something we all long for but often fail in. We are wise enough to know that friendship cannot be gained by the click of a button.

How can you experience true, real, biblical, enjoyable friendship? New Series on Relationships . . . This morning we are going to look at the . . .

**"Best Friendship Ever"**  
**Proverbs 17:17; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a**

**The Point: Strive to be a great friend by recognizing our love flows from God.**

\*Notice I want each of us to focus more on what it looks like to be a friend, to give friendship, rather than simply receiving friendship from others.

**I. Realize we all need and long for friendship (Prov 17:17).**

**"A friend . . ."**

- With these two words, we see the presence of a friendship. From the very beginning, friendship has been an essential aspect of our humanity.
- We long for friendship. Why? In the very beginning, we see that God made us for friendship.
- God did not make us to live in isolation. Our hearts will ache apart from friendship. We actually need it.
- God says all of his creation is good. Light. Good. Land. Good. Animals. Good. Man. Good. All that God was made was very good.
- BUT when is the first time the Scripture says something is not good? "It is not good that the man should be alone." (Genesis 2:18)
- Now, was this in any way an arbitrary move on God's part? Hey, Adam looks lonely there. I

think I help a brother out.

- No! God made for friendship, because he is a relational God, and he has made us in his image to reflect who he is.

Nature of God: Triune

- You have to understand that before anything we know in the created order existed, God existed. God is eternal.
- And he has eternally existed in relationship as Father, Son, & Spirit. Our God, the one true God, the only God, is the Triune God.
- **III. The Trinity: The Scriptures reveal that the one God eternally exists in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person has distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14). (RHC Statement of Faith)**
- Now listen to the argument of **Richard of St. Victor**, a 12<sup>th</sup> century theologian: **“if God were just one person, he could not be intrinsically loving, since for all eternity (before creation) he would have had nobody to love.”** [Do you see that? If God existed without his threeness, without being triune, he would have only had himself to love. All of his love would have been directed inward. [And by the way, God could not be, in his nature and essence, our eternal Father.]] You say, okay, well why isn’t God simply Father and Son, not Father, Son, & Spirit. Richard has an answer for that as well. He continues: **“If there were two persons . . . God would be loving, but in an excluding, ungenerous way. . . . But when the love between two persons is happy, healthy and secure, they rejoice to share it. Just so it is with God.** [God is a sharing God.]”
- This is why the Christian understanding of God is so attractive!
- When we speak of God, we are always speaking, not in a generic sense, a god up there or the god of our imagination; we are speaking of the triune God.
- We live in a culture of mobility. It is more difficult to build deep friendships because of people often move on. We all have time constraints. This is why it is all the more important that we understand the nature of friendship.

Why does it suck being lonely? This is why. Even if you are an introvert . . . You say well I don’t like people. Dude, there is something wrong with you! ☺

T: We all need and long friendship. That’s step #1. #2 . . .

## II. Let love be the driving force of every friendship (Prov 17:17).

**“A friend loves . . .”**

- The essence of friendship is love.

Nature of God: Triune

- In his triune nature as three persons, God has forever existed, not just in relationship, but in *loving* relationship. It is his essence. It is who he is.
- As Jesus said in his “high priestly prayer” moments before he was led away to be crucified: **“Father, I desire that they also . . . see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24)**
- Michael Reeves, in his excellent book *Delighting in the Trinity*, argues that this is why God created the world in the first place. If someone asked you, **“Why did God create the world?”** I can imagine some of you would respond by saying, “You know, I’m not sure. That’s a good

question.” And hopefully you would go search it out. Others of you, would say, “God created all things for his glory.” Yes. But what does that mean? To point to his greatness? Yes! To show how amazing and brilliant, and worthy he is? Yes. But is there more for us to understand.

- Listen to what **Michael Reeves** says: **“The very nature of the triune God is to be effusive, ebullient, and bountiful; the Father rejoices to have another beside him, and he finds his very self in pouring out his love. Creation is about the spreading, the diffusion, the outward explosion of that love.”**
- You say, Tanner, didn’t they teach you in preaching class not to use words that are difficult to understand. Sure. Yes, I didn’t forget that. But words matter. Words carry weight. They have force. So let me unpack these so you feel the weight of who God is and how he relates to you.
  - **Effusive = “lacking restraint”**
  - **Ebullient = “overflowing with fervor, enthusiasm, excitement.”**
  - **Bountiful = “abundant”**
  - **Explosion = “a sudden and spectacular bursting forth”**
- Why did God create the world? Because God is love!
- Why did God create the world? Because it is the natural consequence of his eternal nature. \*\*\*
- Do you see the depths here? The glory of God is the going forth of his inherent perfections. Glory radiates, pours out the manifestation and display of who God is,
- So God making the world for his glory and making the world because of his eternally loving nature are one in the same.
  
- Let’s get personal. Why did God make you? Because he loves. You are the product of love. P
- No one can love you like God loves you. How humbling is that? How amazing is that?
- How satisfying is that? How empowering is that? You say, how does that empower? Here’s why: Because his love motivates our love. Our love flows from him. He is the source.
- Memorize these words: **“We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)**
  
- Do you see the connection now, if we were made in the image of God? Not only were we made to exist in relationship. We were made to exist in *loving* relationship.
- And the implications are massive! Listen to this: As you drink deeply from the fountain of God’s love, you will be empowered to exhibit his love in your friendships.
- Sometimes we just get a little sip of God’s love and then throw our hands up and wonder what the problem is!
- Get in with God, become intimately acquainted with his love, feast on his love, and you will have little trouble getting in with other people.

*T: Turn to 1 Cor 13. Read - 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a*

- Please take these words and allow them to cover your life and cover your every friendship.
- Love is the foundation of friendship. “A friend loves.” Assess your friendships by these words. . .

**Love is . . .**

- **Patient:** Anybody a work in progress around here? So is everyone around you. So are your friends. We need to exercise patient love.
- **and kind,**
  - A friend naturally look for opportunities to do good for others. One of the ways we do this is through our words.
  - **“Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” (Prov. 27:9)**
  - Do you speak words of counsel and encouragement that build others up? If not, what

kind of friend are you?

- **love does not envy**

- What can wound a friendship? Envy. Jealousy. We want what others possess, whether it be a material or immaterial possession.
- T: This comes from a self-seeking attitude, which is why Paul continues . . .

- **or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way;**

- Can you see how loving friendship is driven by humility? And what does humility say? "You before me. Your interests before my interests."

- **it is not irritable or resentful;**

- All of these characteristics thus far scream that love is not selfish. Love does not look to receive. Love is selfless and finds delight in the act of giving.

- \*So Tanner, how does this all relate to friendship? Let me take you to **John 15:15**...

- Just hours before his death, Jesus said these powerful words to his disciples: "**No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**"

- Look at how Jesus interacted with his disciples: though he was God, he treated them, not as servants, but friends. He brings them in! There is self-disclosure, intimacy, trust. "I'm not here to take from you. I'm here to give you everything I've got."

- If you win, I win. If you struggle, I'm struggling. My life is bound up in your life. That is true friendship. What else? Love . . .

- **it does not rejoice at wrongdoing,**

- A friend is concerned for purity . . . Transformation in Community... "We are a community being transformed by the gospel."

- **but rejoices with truth.**

- A friend is willing to say hard things...

- Why is it hard to say hard things for a friend to hear? Because they wound our pride. And anything that wounds a friend wounds us.

- It hurts us to say tough things because we feel pain along with them, because that's what true friendship is like.

- Community Groups...

- "**Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.**" (Proverbs 27:6)

- Remember, "transformation in community." That's what we are after. As we said a couple of weeks ago: the normal culture of Redemption Hill should be one of getting below the surface.

- Tell me how *you* are doing, *really*? Well, people are driving me crazy. I have not opened my Bible in weeks, and I really don't even want to be here tonight.

- OK, Now we can go somewhere . . .

- T: Whether it be an encouraging word or a hard word, here's the goal of true friendship...

- "**As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**" (Proverbs 27:17)

- What a shame to be in friendship, where there is no sharpening, no progress in godliness, no moving on toward Christlikeness! If that's the goal of our lives, then it should be the goal of our friendships.

- [Holy Conversation]

- **Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.**

- Does love define your friendships? When people think of you, do they think of a person who loves?

- Sometimes we complain about not receiving true friendship, when we consistently fail to display 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love to those around us.

T: We all long for friendship because we were made for it, and as those made in the nature of the triune God, we were made so that love is the driving force of our friendships. Now, finally. . .

### III. Be a great friend by displaying undying, faithful love (Prov. 17:17).

#### **“A friend loves *at all times*.”**

- We could say a friend is faithful, but that wouldn't be enough. A true friend is faithful in distributing love.
- The phrase “at all times”\_ simply highlights the enduring nature of love. We just saw this in 1 Corinthians 13: “endures all things.” It always perseveres.
- Here's a little word to the wise: perfect friendship will never exist this side of eternity. That's why perseverance is required.
  - Yes, you let me down. But I love you. We're friends.
  - Yes, I let you down. But you love me. We're friends, and true friendship perseveres.
- The world says: Let's be friends as there is benefit in it for me, as long as it's working out for me. Basically, worldly friendship is quite conditional. Make me mad. I'm done. Say the wrong thing, hurt my feelings, say something about my mama, and it's all over wit.
- True friendship goes the distance.
- You know what really helps? Communication. Do you ever communicate your love, verbalize your love for others?
- Many people grew up with parents, and especially fathers, who rarely said, “I love you.” Now, I understand some of that was a generational thing. Some of those fathers, no doubt, loved with great intensity and faithfulness even if they did not verbalize it. BUT let me say, it is a good and edifying and right and true to look someone in the eye and tell them “I love you.”
- Men, this includes us. It's okay for us to say we love one another. Now, we might say, “Love ya bro. Love ya dawg. Much love playa.” But still, it is manly to love.
- Many men, and women for that matter, love with featherweight strength, when God calls us to reflect the love of the Man who covered a Roman cross with his blood and embodied the greatest love, a love that goes the distance and clear for all the see.

#### **Conclusion**

- I want you to ponder two things with me as we bring our time to a close:
  - 1) The Gospel frees us to love - - - Gospel: Love Pure and Unbroken; Love Rejected; Love Given; Love Restored . . . . We were made for loving relationship. We were saved for loving relationship, and one day we will experience God's restoration and forever experience eternity in loving relationship. Friendship is our destiny.
  - 2) If the glory of God is the radiance, the going forth of his essence for all to see and his essence is love, what is our assignment then to glorify God? It is to display his character. The job of the Christian is to radiate the radiance of God, and **“Let all you do be done in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14)**

LORD'S SUPPER. . . .