



## Christian Friendship - Part 1

### Acceptance & Hospitality

John 15:12-15

We're going to take a little break from our Luke series this summer and talk about Friendship. Friendship. You know friendship sure was easy and uncomplicated when we were little kids, wasn't it? Certainly, a lot easier and more uncomplicated, you walk home the same way I do from school, we're friends. Your last name is next to mine in alphabetical order, we're friends. You like the same kind of candy bar that I like, we're best friends. I mean that's just good, that's all it takes. And those relationships were resilient, weren't they? I mean I can remember going through all kinds of things, pushing and shoving and even fist fights with some of my best friends and you know after the ice comes off your swollen lip its like, what are we going to do this weekend? They were tough relationships and lasting. But then as grown-ups everything seems to change. Making new friends well it's not as easy, I mean we seem to as adults reach our friendship quota and after that we're not making new friends and matter of fact the friends we have start dropping off, they move away, things happen, people get offended, I mean talk about resilience, they're not very resilient. We wait till our feelings get hurt and then we withdraw we pull back and we recognize we don't quite have the friends we use to have. As a matter of fact, I think most people these days, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the West and I hate to say it even here in Southern California it's even worse. We've got one or two friends and we think that's all I need that's all I've got, everything's fine. (02:01)

But God has some thing to say about that and I don't think he's going to agree. He speaks to us throughout the word about our relationships and this concept of friendship, if you look for it you'll find it often in the Bible as something that we are challenged to look beyond what I think most people particularly in our culture in our day in our little corner of our world we've got a long way to go. It doesn't seem to match. And so it was something that our leaders, our ministry leaders, our pastors sat down and thought we really think we need a time as a church to take a time out from our study of Luke just to study this one topic and so I choose to make it a three week series as we think through what the Bible has to say and more specifically what God has to say to you about your friendships. (02:48)

So, this morning I want to use as our text that we look at John chapter 15 as Jesus calls his disciples together in the Upper room and gives them what I like to say, is the coach there in the locker room before he goes to the cross and sends his disciples out into the world, he's got some very important last instructions for them. And in chapter 15 he has a lot to say about friendship. So, we're just going to deal with 4 verses, verses 12, 13, 14 and 15 in John chapter 15. Four verses John chapter 15 verses 12 through 15. Four verses is all we'll look at, four observations about each of this verses and then four implications and applications that we need to start taking seriously as God's call in our own life. And seriously I think we all need this. If you're the one or two people in the room that have got this whole topic figured out, then great. But take notes for someone else because I know you know some people that need to expand their network and circle of friends because most of us are far deficient in this as we think through Christ's instructions beginning in verse 12. (03:54)

When he says, this is my suggestion. Oh man, if I read this wrong ever you be sure to correct me. This is my opinion, no that's not it either. This is my commandment. We hate those words, don't we? This is my commandment, my commandment. In Hebrews, it says, man, if you looked in the Old Testament about how God responded when people broke his commandments and you think he took a nap between testaments and kind of chilled out and doesn't feel that way anymore, you really got to think about how much more serious it is and egregious it is to dismiss his commandments in the New Testament. Here's one of the central commands for us as followers of Christ. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friend, which by the way was exactly what he was about to do. You are my friends, verse 14 says, if you do what I command you. 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. Before we begin to accept people as friends we need to accept the concept. And I want to begin by examining that commandment in verse 12 as we just begin to make our first observation about this text and to do that I suppose we need to go back up a few verses to verse number 9 to give a context as to how he takes this command from the template that it exists within the Trinity. (05:33)

Look at verse number 9, as the Father has loved me, Jesus says, so I have loved you. Now abide in my love. As the Father has loved me, Jesus says, the Son, so I have loved you. Now verse 12, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. So, look at the cascading picture here. Father loves the Son, the Son loves the disciples, the disciples now are told to love each other. Of course, they represent us in this text, of course this command is for us as well, but you need to see it's rooted in the Trinitarian relationships in the Godhead. And that reminds us by the way of the fact that we are the way we are with the needs and capacities that we have because we were created in the image of God. That's why in verse number 11 he says these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you. I can be happy and pleased and that your joy maybe full because you're made for this, this is what you're designed for, because much like the Son exists in an inter-trinitarian eternal fellowship of love between the Father and the Son and the Spirit if we were to round out this picture. So, it is that you are needing these relationships and as a matter of fact when you think of the topic of friendship you need to, number 1 on your outline, you need to realize that you were made for it. Number 1, realize you're made for friendship (06:56)

### 1. Realize you're made for friendships

Father loves the Son that may seem like a familial picture, of course with the words father and son but he's about to say you're my friends, I've loved you as friends, I want you to love each other as friends. And just like the Father loved the Son that's the template and you need to know this is what you need to do. And you know your joy will be full if you do this because you're designed for this. It's what I like to say around here that great Greek word, teleios, it will be as it's designed to be, it'll be the sense of "Ahh that's right", that's what I need. So, in a sense we can look at the duty of verse 12, this is my commandment and you can say, "Okay, yes sir, I need friends, I'm going to do that." But really, it's also carrot if you will that hangs out saying that if you would just do this, your joy would be full. This is how you're designed. So, there's a deficiency I suppose in your life if you're saying, "Well, I got my one or two friends that's all I need." And I don't mean to try and quantify how many friends you're suppose to have but it does help us that there's a context here of twelve guys sitting around a table with Jesus and he's giving them this command at least this picture is one where we're not talking about one or two, we're talking about a team of people that are walking through life together. And so, I have to tell you that most of us need to recognize the need that we have and it's one that based on the fact ontologically or how we are as defined beings made in the image of God, you need these relationships. Because the very first thing God said wasn't good about his creation was what? Not good that man should be alone. (08:27)

I've created someone here who needs fellowship, who needs friendship. And you say, "Okay Mike I got an excuse for not expanding my friendship circle because I know who he created, he created Eve, and so he's creating marriage and family. You know I've got to say that my friendship needs are met in my family." Well if you're saying that I think you're very short sighted because in the scripture we recognize that our need for friends and our call to friendship expands outside of our family and you may be getting a lot of friendship in your family and you should. As a matter of fact, if you read the Song of Solomon, Solomon talks about his Shulammitte Bride, and calls her often his friend. And you should be friends with your spouse if you happen to be a married person, fantastic and you get a lot of that connection in your family just like the Father in the Trinity has that love for the Son. And you say I love my children there's so much gratification and joy I get out of my family and that's great. But that's not enough. In the scripture, it's very clear that the concept of friendship extends outside of the family. Jot this one down, a lot of Proverbs I'll throw out to you this morning. But in Proverbs chapter 27 verse number 10, it says do not forsake your friend or your Father's friend. Just look at that picture of the web of networks. I need the loyalty of a group of people that are outside my family and even family members' connections and friends I need to make sure I'm loyal and committed to them. (09:51)

It may be a good time for us by the way to define this word at least in my summation of what I'm calling Christian friendship in the Bible and I'll take time throughout the series I suppose to piece together a composite of why this is a good definition in my mind. But let me give you my definition. Christian friendship, here's what I'm talking about. A mutual relationship, a mutual relationship, a relationship of mutuality, there's some kind of reciprocity here of at least three things, of trust, of acceptance and of concern or care. I mean these are some basic elements, that may be a reductionistic definition but there it is. The idea in my study of the New Testament is that if I am going to be a friend with someone there has to be some kind of reciprocity, some kind of mutuality in my relationship of trust. We trust each other, we accept each other, and we have a mutual concern for one another. (10:46)

Which by the way if you want to argue for relationships of friends that go beyond our family you just need to look to David who had family life, he had a good family life not perfect obviously if you know his story, but in that relationship that he had with Jonathan he said this philo love to use a New Testament word it's a bit anachronistic but follow me here, the sense of my friendship with Jonathan is even better than to use another Greek word the eros or romantic friendship that I may have with my spouse. And there's something augmenting in life when I have those relationships that extend outside my marriage and my relationship with my immediate family. I need to have the connections like David had with Jonathan where there's a mutual acceptance, a mutual trust and a mutual concern. And I might as well quote that at the very beginning as it describes their relationship in 1 Samuel chapter 18 verse 1, here's a bit of the definition. It says his soul was knit to David. So, David and Jonathan they connect in some way, there's that mutuality between them. And it says and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And though that doesn't define all the components it certainly includes them. In other words, I certainly accept myself, I certainly trust myself, I certainly have a sense of care for myself. And in my friendships, that's what there needs to be. And that's what we need more of and more relationships of that. (12:07)

Now what's the limit on that, well there is a limit and I don't know what it is. I can't give you a number but I can quote another Proverb. Proverbs chapter 18 verse 24, Proverbs 18:24. A man of many friends, or the ESV many companions comes to ruin. In other words, you cannot be in a mutual relationship of trust, acceptance and concern for everyone, you just can't. you can't be friends with everyone on your block, you can't be friends with everyone in your workplace, you can't be friends with everyone in the church, you can't. You have to have a parameter, a border where you say these are the special select group of people in my life that I have that reciprocal mutual acceptance trust and concern it's though I'm caring for myself. If they have an issue I feel that, if there's a challenge in their life, I'm praying for that. I walk through those things with them, you can't be a man of many friends. But I can say I don't think twelve is the magic number either, although most of us are dealing with few friends we can count on one hand. (13:07)

I think the Apostle Paul is a good example if you watch the template of Apostle Paul in his deep friendships that he has with people as he describes in the end of many of his letters that he writes, you'll see him describe people by name in his letters. In Colossians for instance in the end of 1 Corinthians or the end of Romans. Romans chapter 16 he lists all these names of all these people it's not just a laundry list, he has very important things to say about the role these people play in his life and the way that he has a mutual trust and concern and a mutual acceptance of these people in the book of Romans in just one chapter he lists 33 different people by name. Now think about that. People that he has enough of a relationship with to describe in detail as playing a very important role in his life and in his ministry. All I'm saying is if you're sitting here today going, "Yeah well, I don't have a lot of friends but the friends I have I'm satisfied with.", I just want to push you beyond the borders right now. I don't think many of us are in danger of having the Proverbs chapter 18 verse 24 problem of having too many friends. We need more relationships of mutual trust, acceptance and concern. And I'm concerned I should say about our church as we sat around as leaders in our church and we talked about the issues of concern for our church and we said we really should preach on the topic of what the Bible has to say regarding friendships because we need more of it in our church. We need a greater network of it, we need more people included in these networks. It's not about going to a program or being part of some kind of program in our church. This is about a kind of discipline of godliness that we're here to teach on in the next few weeks. (14:43)

I don't know what the number is but for the sake of illustration let's just say it's 18. If God looks at your life and says that person needs 18 friends that's a good norm for him, that's how it ought to be, that may seem high to you but let's just say for the sake of illustration say that. And you're running on 6 or 7. You're running on 3 or 4. Can you imagine an 18-wheel big rig truck designed to run on 18 wheels, can it run on 10? Well, yeah it can. But can you imagine trying to run through the Christian life and you're designed to do it with the support, mutual concern, mutual acceptance and trust of 18 people in your life and you're really doing it with 7, 5, hate to say it, some of you are doing it on 3. Realize you were made for friendship and most of us in the room, you need more. And that's what we're here to talk about for the next few weeks. (15:34)

I said there are four observations to make about four of these verses. Let's drop down to verse 14. I'll come back to verse 13. We'll close on that one. But in John chapter 15 verse 14 the next thing he says is that you are my friends if you do what I command you. Now the egomaniacs in the room go, alright. That's awesome. If that's biblical friendship I like it already, everyone's got to do what I say, you've got some dictatorial personality, that's awesome. You can be my friend if you just do whatever I tell you to do. Clearly you can't apply this verse at face value to



yourself because you're not Jesus Christ. If you're Jesus Christ, great you have this verse exactly as it lies there in the passage and you can say these are my friends only if they do what I command. But remember this as he describes it there in verse number 10, now I purposely skipped that up in the context but let's look at that now. (16:27)

After he says the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. Look at verse 10. If you keep my commandments, you abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and I abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. So, here's a connection that the Son has with the Father and in his submission to the Father, he says I have done everything that was prescribed by the Father, now I'm telling you to abide in my love the way that I abided in my Father's love and I want you to keep my commandments. But he clearly was not implying that hey, Philip I want you to befriend Peter but only if Peter does what you command him. And Thomas I want you to be friends with Andrew but only if he does what you, clearly that's not the point. It does though provide us an application of a boundary here. When we're talking about the relationship of mutual acceptance, trust and concern, we're talking about selecting that group of people that are going to run in that core of my life, that have that commitment to obey the king. In other words, they're the people that are committed to doing what Christ commands because I want to be friends with people that are friends with Christ. Therefore, it's a certain kind of person that I'm looking for to befriend. Now I hate for this to sound like a Junior High Sunday school lesson. It's good for them, it's good for us, let's jot it down that way. Number 2, you need to choose your friends wisely. (17:54)

## 2. Choose your friends wisely

And parents you've said that to your Junior Higher haven't you? But you do know that it could be something that you state in the mirror at your own house because it applies to you as much as it applies to them. As a matter of fact, the principles that you're applying to your adolescent are the principles we derive from the scriptures that were given to full grown adults. When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33 do not be deceived, bad company corrupts good morals, it wasn't at a youth rally he was preaching this sermon. He was saying it to full grown Corinthians who lived, as I like to say, in the Orange County of the ancient world saying I know there's a lot of people that are sold out to themselves, sold out to idolatry, materialism, to greed and lust. Those are the people you need to watch out for and those are the people if they're in your company, in your circle of mutual concern, acceptance and trust, that's going to corrupt your track of sanctification. Do not be deceived, just like your Junior Higher says, "Oh but Mom, you know what? I am really being a good influence on them. And so, it's a good thing, isn't it? That I'm being helpful. And isn't that Christ-like? I'll be good for them. And you know what? They won't influence me." That's why that great principle is preceded with "Do not be deceived" because it's easy for us as human beings to try and think we're the exception to this and I can go out there with people that do not want to keep the Lord's commandments and say I bring them into my inner circle, I have a growing relationship of mutual trust, and concern and acceptance and those are people that won't influence the direction of my life. You know the people that you are going to bring into your life as friends are going to influence your life. So, when I look at this text and it says I can be Christ's friends if I do what I'm commanded, what Christ commanded me. Then that's the kind of people I need to look for to build these relationships of friendships. (19:39)

And to quote some more Junior High verses that are also designed for adults, let me quote another Proverb for you. In Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20 it says whoever walks with the wise, those who do the things that God commands, will become wise. I certainly want friends that are going to help me continue down the path of my sanctification. But whoever is a companion of fools, if you have in your company, people that don't do what God wants us to do, well then, you're going to suffer harm. So, we need to recognize that the decisions that I make about those that enter this circle of my life of my friends, mutual trust, concern and acceptance, need to people that I'm selective about. You may say, "Well I though Christianity was about loving everybody?" It is about loving everybody; you should love people that are even your enemies that hate God. Love them. What does that mean though? Love is not a feeling, love does not equal friendship, love is me wanting what's good for them and I am going to pray even for my enemies and the best thing I can pray for them is to stop being an enemy of God and an enemy of me. I'm going to pray for them and do good things for them. I'm going to try to do all that I can like Christ to lead them to repentance, even by my kindness, but it doesn't mean I'm their friends, not in a biblical sense. A distinction you need to make in your mind right now, just like you need to help your Junior Highers make in their mind, there's a difference between being friendly and being friends. You should be friendly to everyone, you should. I mean with few exceptions, there are extreme exceptions to that. But you're to be friends with a select group of people that are



committed to keeping God's commandments, that is if you are committed to keeping God's commandments. Choose your friends wisely. (21:19)

I was able to preach this week to your teenagers from Colossians chapter 3 verse 16 and we underscored two very important words in that text when it says in the middle of the verse, that we are to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. That was a section where I took some time out of that passage and said we need to think about our friendships. Now I used those two words to say, these are two different directions of influence. Teaching and admonishing. Teaching in all wisdom is to lead me in the path of increasing sanctification. So, if I want to keep God's commandments I'm pulling people around me that are also committed to that and guess what happens? Iron sharpens iron and I find myself more encouraged to keep the commandments of God. Admonishing, here's the other side of it. Admonishing is a word we don't use a lot, but it means to be able to sternly or sharply or tersely be able to correct someone when they're going off the path. Noutheteo for those of you who are into biblical counseling, we get nouthetic counseling from that the transliterated word, nouthetic, that Greek word means to be able to go in and sharply correct someone if they're doing the wrong thing. So, I need a friend that's not just going to cheer me on to do the right thing and I find that my relationship with this person is helping move me toward Christ but I want to have someone when they see me moving away from Christ they're willing to speak up and even say a hard thing to get me back on track. Which is where most of us check out of relationships because they offended me, they're judging me, stop with that. If you don't have a friend that feels like they're occasionally judging you, then what you've got is the problem to quote another Proverb, of Proverbs 27 verse 6 that says profuse are the kisses of an enemy. All they do is cheer you on no matter what road you take, no matter what you're doing. But you know the first part of that passage, faithful are the blank of a friend, the what? Wounds of a friend. Why would a friend wound me? Well, because it's always hard to hear a sharp and stern rebuke when I'm doing the wrong thing. If you can't take correction from people in your life you will have no friends. Not in a biblical sense, all you'll have is the deceitful kisses of people that want to flatter you. And that's never a place to be because you have no idea what their motives are for their relationship with you. You want people to walk this road of life with you who are Christians who love God and his word so much so that they see you careening off the path they're going to say, "Listen, we've got to talk." Choose your friends wisely that might be a good measure, a benchmark for us to think this through. (23:51)

And by the way it should be obvious, when you find that people that you're hanging out with that become your mutual relationships of trust, acceptance and concern end up causing you to sin or increase the sin in your life. Then remember this verse as long as we're taking copious notes, Matthew chapter 18 verse 7, Matthew 18:7, Jesus said, "Woe to the world – that's not the word the way we use it, I mean this is a terrible thing – woe to the world for temptations to sin! Now temptations are going to come, that's necessary. but woe to the one by whom those temptations come!" And I think you know the rest of that. If there's someone in your life that ends up leading you into increasing gossip, into increasing lust, into increasing lying, fits of anger, discontentedness, covetousness, being dissatisfied, whatever it might be, if you find time with them lead you down a path like that, the Bible goes on to say, "Woe to them through whom those temptations come. If they cause one of my children to sin it would be better for him to have a big rock doughnut around their neck – that's a millstone – and thrown into the sea." So, you may be saying, "Well, I'm loving them and I don't want to bail and I don't want to pull back from them because I'm trying to be Christ-like." Christ is in heaven going like man these people need to be extracted from my child's life. Choose your friends wisely. (25:13)

Verse 15 which is really the core of what we need to talk about this morning. The difference between some people in your life and real friends is this described for us here. No longer do I call you servants, John 15:15, 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. Jesus had knowledge, information from God the Father, he hangs out with his disciples and in this meal, you can picture someone maybe coming in, now of course this wasn't the case with Christ because they weren't rich enough to have the servant and slaves that would come in and serve them, but picture someone who did, you've got servants coming in and waiting on the table. You have discussion with the people seated at the table with you a lot different than the discussion you have with the person serving the table. To modernize it, it's like you sitting in a restaurant booth with someone that you know, and you're sharing with them why you're ordering a salad and not a steak because they've never seen you eat rabbit food before and there you are eating the salad and when the waiter came you didn't explain to him anything about that, because it doesn't matter because he's just the waiter and you just give him information. Will you be polite? Sure, you'd be polite, will you be kind, yes, you'll be kind, will you be loving? You might even invite him to church, that's great. Might share the gospel





with him but it's your friend that you're sharing and opening up your information about why you do what you do, and what you know and how you live and why things are the way they are in your life. That's the opening up of yourself. Number 3, let's put it that way. You need to open up yourself, open yourself up to new friends. (26:42)

### 3. Open yourself up to new friends

And again, that's a bit of an interpretation based on my Pastoral concern for Compass Bible Church at this point in time. I think more of us need more friends, not less. And so, I want you to see this as a very directed pastoral concern in your life that you and I in the summer of this year need to get out there and start opening up our lives more to new relationships of people that are committed to obeying Christ and creating these mutual relationships of concern, trust and acceptance. (27:12)

Here's a word that might help with this as long as we're studying this concept in the scripture. When ever you run across the word hospitality that's what it means. Hospitality. I know you may picture someone opening up their home and putting an extra place setting out on a table for someone who is coming to dinner. And that has a germane connection to the concept but the core of the concept of hospitality is a picture of someone who is letting people in to their lives. That's the idea of hospitality. And as long as we're talking about a few Greek words this morning let me throw out this compound word because it's helpful in describing the picture of where we get this word and the concept of hospitality biblically. It's a compound word, two parts, the first part I think you know, filo. Do you know the word filo? It comes from the verb fileo. We have a city in America that starts with that part of the compound. Phila-dephia. Now if you really know something about the background of these words you know the second half of that and I guess even the secular person understands this. That the word Philadelphia means what? Brotherly love, because adelphos the second half of word is the Greek word for brother. Filo or the verb fileo is the opening part of that word and that means love or friend. Matters of fact when we see the word friend in our passage three times, that's the word. Filo, someone who is my friend, I accept them, I embrace them, I bring them into my inner circle of mutual trust and concern and care. (28:34)

That is compounded in the word that we translate, hospitality with the second half and we get an English word from that as well, the Greek word is zenos, zenos. Zenos we have a compound I suppose at certain times describing certain people in certain places, you might hear it, you might read it in certain places. Zenophobia, zenophobia, now we know phobia also comes from a Greek word, phobas, and that means what? Fear. Zenophobia we call that the fear of what? Strangers, the fear of outsiders, the fear of people that aren't like me. Zenophobia. Zenos you need to understand is the word an outsider, a stranger. Now when we use the word in modern you know commentary we talk about people being zenophobic, we're usually talking about people looking at people that are ethnically not like them and that's not the idea in the text of scripture although it certainly includes it. To be a filo zenos if you will, to really break it down in a wooden way, is to treat as my friend, or as an insider, someone who is a stranger and is not really an insider. Hospitality at it's core is the concept of exactly what I'm trying to communicate here in point number 3. It is the opening up of my life in a way to include people that wouldn't naturally be there. (29:53)

In other words, there are people in my life that naturally are insiders. My wife, my kids, they're insiders. They're going to be in my house I assume this afternoon, although we see a lot less of our kids these days. But anyway, they have a key, so occasionally they're there. But they're insiders. They might walk in anytime this afternoon, this is their domain, this is their home at least for now they live among us. For me to treat an outsider like an insider would be to take someone who's not a part of my family and bring them into my home and that is inclusive in the concept when you heard the word hospitality in the subtitle this morning, clearly it involves that. If someone comes over for dinner that's an act of hospitality, why? Because I'm treating an outsider like an insider but let's start at the very fundamental level and clutter up your outline with five sub-points right now. Are you ready? (30:38)

Here we go. Five ways that friendship requires an opening up of myself to bring outside to the inside. Number 1, you need to let in, ready? Let people in to your mind. Now, write it down and then I'll explain it and make it distinctive of what you probably thought when I said it. First thing, I'm letting people in, I'm opening myself up to my mind. Now by that I don't mean sharing your mind or giving them a piece of your mind, keep your mind for now. What I mean is this, to use a crass illustration which I often do about us being computers. You've got a hard drive between your ears, you've got hard drive space in there, I hope there's some space left in there. You meet someone on the patio today, there's all kinds of data about who they are and it's not in there right now. You need to open up your mind to get those people and their information in your hard drive. Use the two USB ports right here on



the side of your head. And you use the output device which is your mouth basically to go fishing for information to put in your mind. Because right now if you leave this auditorium, you walk to your car, get in car and go home you might see people on the way to your car, you don't know them, you don't know their name, you don't know where they live, you don't know what they do, you don't know anything about their lives, you just pass them. Now the first thing I'm asking you to do is to open up some hard drive space for information about those people and get that information into your mind. You cannot have friendship without that. That's the start, you want to talk about opening yourself up to new friends it starts with you just learning about people. You've got to start with that. (32:24)

Number 2, now we can think through what you probably thought of when I said let them into your mind. You want to let them into info about your life. Now I understand the info about your life is also resident on your hard drive. Now it's time for you to share some of that with them. It's got to be reciprocal it's a mutual relationship and it starts with the openness and acceptance that begins with sharing that information. So, I need to now let them in to let them know about me. Now as your Grandma use to say, you've got two ears and one mouth and that proportionally should tell you something, that you should be listening more and talking less and that's not just Granny's advice. You do understand that comes from the Bible. The Bible says you ought to be quick to hear and slow to speak. So, let me say this. The standard needs to be, even as we start, we're going to have some lab time, as soon as we're done we're going to break you're going to have an opportunity to talk to people you don't know. Now go talk to those people you don't know and you need to seek to get more information about them then you give about you. And if you just said two ears one mouth let's just get twice as much information as they get. Listen I guarantee you it won't work out that way because we have a fundamental problem at the core of who we are as fallen individuals and that's called selfishness. And we're not even good at getting names into our hard drive and you say, "Well I'm really not good at names." You know why you're not good at names? Because you can't wait to get data on your hard drive out into their USB drives. You are considering and thinking about how you can share all your valuable information about who you are and their name just bounced right off your forehead. Why? Because you didn't care. Just didn't care, you're nervous. How do I look? Did I say the right thing? I don't know? Your brain is going and you don't even realize to be a real friend, you've got to start by listening. You can practice this, I'm about to let you go into the lab time to practice this. You listen. You say with your output device, tell me, you get that information. And then of course you share, it's not about you being secret agent man. Let your information out but see if you can do it proportionally and I guarantee if you shoot for 100% more output than input, I guarantee you're probably just about balance to the way it ought to be. (34:44)

Now we'll move toward more traditional understanding of the concept of hospitality. Let's start with this one, sharing your meals. Let them into your meals. There's something so important about this in the Bible. Let them into my mind, letting them in on info in my life, letting them into my meals. I'm not talking about your home right now, just talking about meals. I know in the Bible times there was a lot of instruction about having meals together, and that's very important. There's something about that, matter of fact at one time I thought I'm sketching down my ideas I want to write a book on that topic and then I found one, Tim Chester, it's on the back of your worksheet, he already wrote it so I don't need to write it. But there it is. The idea of how important meals are in the scripture, you can track this from the Old Testament all the way through the life of Christ all the way through the new early church in the book of Acts. There's something to be said for that. That time of social interaction with in a meal, that thing you need to share that with people. Now some of you say, "I'm an introvert, I like to eat alone." I understand that. Not saying every meal needs to be a party but you need to start to open up your life in a way that you're sharing those meals together which is a great opportunity to do the first two things on the list. Let them in to the database of your mind. Let them in on info from your life. Let them in on your mealtimes. I know in the first century there wasn't a restaurant on every corner so they were doing that in homes, but let's just start by having those meals together, restaurant is fine, let's do that. (36:09)

Number 4, let them in to your activities. Let them in to your activities. We are, and I didn't even put these references I don't think on the worksheet, I don't know doesn't matter, the point is there is so much isolation in our Western culture. We do so many things alone and we build barriers and buffers around our lives and all I'm saying is it's going to take Christians with a godly concern to do things God's way to start opening up those activities to do them with more of my friends. I don't know what it is that's so important about you doing things in private by yourself, watching television, whatever, open up your life to do more activities with people that will become those mutual relationships of trust, acceptance and concern. (36:53)

Lastly then let's talk about the thing you thought of first, hospitality. Open up your home. Open up your home. I

don't like opening up my home. I don't know what you've got in your house that you don't want people to see. But throw it in the closet and let people in your house. Open up your home. Well, it's a hassle. Everything important is a hassle have you noticed that? Can we just get over that? Yes, it's going to be a little bit difficult, it'll be inconvenient but Christ didn't say, verse 12, this is my opinion or this is my suggestion, this is my commandment. And the concept of love involves this cornerstone of hospitality, and hospitality is the opening up of my inside life to people that are outside and letting them in. And so, the ultimate I suppose would get right to the heart of what you thought of when I used the word hospitality. It's the ultimate hospitality I suppose to take the inside domain of my life and allow people in it. Let them into your mind, the database of your mind. Let them in to the info about your life. Let them into your meals, your activities and your home. (37:56)

Now, verse 13, verse 13 as we close out this message will be really nothing more than an introduction to where we're going in the rest of this series. How do I do that? How do I do it? Verse 13 says, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down their life for his friends. Now he's speaking in the third person about someone doing that. No, who is the famous one to do that? Christ? He's about to do that, he's in the Upper room and he's going to go through the kangaroo court and he's going to be betrayed, and he's going to be crucified and he's going to lay down his life for his friends. Ultimate act of love the Bible says, no one has greater love than that, and Christ is about to do it. But in this time, think about the timeline, he's in the Upper room he's speaking with the disciples; he's having a discourse about the importance of loving each other. And he says, "This really would be the ultimate expression of love, someone laying down their life for someone else." And so, they're not thinking about the cross, I mean I don't think that's what's on their mind. They're thinking exactly what we should be thinking about and because Christ would be the ultimate example as it says in 1 John 3:16 that he lay down his life for us. This is how we know love and so we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. That becomes the benchmark which by the way according to Romans chapter 5 verse 8, it's a kind of love that's given. He demonstrates his love to us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is a selfless, unearned, totally generous act of good for someone else. Number 4, let's put it this way, you need to reflect Christ's selfless generosity. (39:34)

#### 4. Reflect Christ's selfless generosity

The point is he is the template and I want to give for the good of someone else even though they don't deserve it. Even though they didn't earn it, even though they didn't feel it because dying on the cross didn't feel good, but I'm going to give a selfless act for the good of someone else. I mean that is the fuel of biblical friendship. Reflect Christ's selfless generosity. Now yourself, you're going to get in the way, guarantee it, that's why Philippians 2 when it speaks of us loving each other as Christ loved us and having the mind in us that is also in Christ Jesus starts with this. You can't do things from selfish ambition or conceit. You have to consider others more important than yourself. And you need to – I love this verse, verse 4, here it is in Greek, I'll give you the word order – not yourselves each observing carefully but the others. Not yourselves each observing carefully but the others. The word interest isn't even in it but we translate it to smooth it out this way, let each of you look not to your own interests but also the interest of others. Now I know it's too wooden to translate it the way it lays out in the Greek language but I love that. Not to yourselves, there's the emphasis. Not to yourselves each observing carefully but to the others. Now the context is me loving people like Christ loved us by dying on a cross and saying you had a need, I'm going to meet the need and I'm going to do good to you and I'm not going to be so concerned with my needs first, I'm going to put your needs first. And I'm going to do things I wouldn't do out of selfless generosity for you. Now as though I haven't given you enough sub-points, let me end with five sub-points. Five sub-points. (41:06)

And I'll say these five sub-points at risk of offending your upbringing or your maturity and I don't mean to do that. But let me run through these in a world where people desperately need the basics and here are some of the basics. Number 1, letter A, you need to reflect Christ's selfless generosity in your courage. Let's start with that, courage. I'm starting at the most fundamental place. If I'm going to love someone, if I'm going to love my friend, if I'm going to have a friendship, it's going to start with me being courageous enough to do something and it's going to start with even just the courage to connect with them. Because for the half of the church that I pastor that runs to their car after the service is over to get in it doesn't talk to anybody maybe runs by and whisks up a kid out of the doorway of a nursery and heads to their car, one of the reasons people do that is they don't have the gumption and stand and just courageously meet people they don't know. I'm just saying let's just be selfless. Christ died naked on a cross and he says, "As I loved you, you love me." If it feels vulnerable if it feels scary, if it's like I'd rather not, but I just don't want to [umm], let's recognize the standard is Christ's death on a cross. Let's at least have the courage to talk to people. I hated those Back to School nights that my kids would drag me to. Hated them, I mean there's no





reason for me to be there. I mean I don't need to meet your teacher, I don't need to meet Ralph, your classmate, I don't want to go. And so of course I get dragged there to these things for one reason and one reason only, love my kid. I'm thinking if it's really about the work you've done, you don't have to pin it on the bulletin board in your classroom, just bring it home, I can look at it there. And so, I go, I stand there and look at the board and look at all this stuff on the board, not wanting to meet anybody but of course my kid has got my hand, oh come meet Johnny, meet Ralph, meet my teacher. No reason to meet your teacher and yet I do it, I'll have the courage to sit there and try to carry on a conversation with Ralph only because I love my kid. I'm able to break past the boundaries of my little cocoon of safe relationships and people I like and people I have things in common with, I'll break out of the because I love my kid. I hope you love Christ enough to start making friends with some of his children that he shed his blood for. It'd be good for you not to run to your car when the service is over. And say I'm going to have the courage to step up to someone I don't know, I don't know their name, I don't know anything. I'm going to start by opening up my hard drive to put a little of their data into my hard drive. Who are you? Don't start with that line, but you can be more polite than that. But let's start with courage. (43:53)

Secondly and again here comes the insulting part, I don't mean to insult your upbringing, you probably already have this but some of us need this reminder. You need to be selfless and generous with your attention, your attention. I find adults are a lot like kids in that little kids when they are there in the lobby and their Mom is there talking to me or their Dad is talking to me, you know the kid wants to hide behind the parents leg, or hide behind Mom's skirt, and I think to myself, parenting these days, rarely does a parent any more try to take the little face of that kid and stick it in front of the person and say, "Say, hi Johnny." That is what they need, they need the courage and then they need to be taught enough to look the person in the eye and have conversation. That's parenting, and I'm thinking to myself adults are the same way when they walk to their car and they don't want to talk to anybody and if they do talk to someone, they don't even look me in the eye. I know I'm scary and all but look me in the eyes. Look me in the eyes. Give me your attention. Can you just in your own mind when you go out and we have lab time and we just start putting this into action that you just look people in the eye and give them your focused attention? You're not looking over their shoulder to see if there's a better option for you to speak to on the patio. Convicting isn't it, you know that's true. Keep your eyes focused and pay attention and ask some follow up questions when you're starting to get the data about their life and you're starting perhaps the germination process of a friendship you have to listen and pay attention. Focus, ask some questions that clarify, give them your eye contact. Be selfless and generous with your courage, your attention. (45:34)

How about this one? Your cheerfulness, your cheerfulness. I didn't know how else to put this but I find with some adults when they get the baby put in their arms, here's Mr. Serious, Mr. Sober, he gets the baby in his arms and all of a sudden now he's the clown-for-rent. [Oh, hey, whoop whoop] Why are you doing that? You are now putting on a clown show for a little kid because you want to get a response, and you want to be Mr. Funny. Listen, that's great, I don't want you to be rent-a-clown to adults but you could smile. You could actually say something polite and kind. You could compliment them, you could say something encouraging to them and yet most people sit around just thinking about what they're going to say next to impress someone or whatever. Just start with the first list of five and go to this list and realize I need to be cheerful. I need to be encouraging. Look at Paul at the end of his letters whether it's the end of 1 Corinthians or Colossians or Romans as he lists those names. Look at what he says, him, me, Ralph, Silas we're just all, yeah we're sending you this letter. He starts talk about Epahradidas, he starts talking about people that he admires and says great things about them and encourages them. Just be profuse and selfless and generous with your cheerfulness, your compliments, your encouragement. Start with a smile, it would be nice. (47:01)

Number 4, you might expect this one, be generous with your time. Your time. We don't want you to run to your car when the service is over. We need networks of friendships in our church. You do know that we're not concerned with your caloric intake that you don't have enough food to make it home, we put donuts out there not so you won't collapse on the way to the car. You understand that right? We're not trying to save you money so you can eat lunch on donuts and coffee, we spend money that is given to the Lord in the offering to put stuff out there to slow you down. Can you not run to your car? And just stop, I don't care if you hate coffee and donuts. I don't drink coffee and I don't eat donuts but I can stop there when people have donuts and coffee and just have a conversation. Start the possibility of a new friendship in your life. Just by slowing down and stopping. And I know that, well my kids are over here, my car is parked over there, this is how serious our leader are about. We want to, we're putting money and time to try and see if we can turn the entire direction of every building in our church this way. Which I probably shouldn't tell you so this is just a secret between us because we haven't gotten it proved and all that. But we want,



we're so committed to you spending time connecting that we want to dump you out in a direction where you'll actually stop and will have this kind of connection and selfless generosity with our time and our attention and our conversation out there on the patio. Because I know, there's no reason for me to go this way, I've got to go this way and then that way. I understand that but where in the world do you have to be this afternoon that you have to leave so quickly. I'm just saying we've got to take our time to focus on each other and it's going to begin with a little, Christ hung on a cross all afternoon, not to mention the whole 30 plus years of his earthly ministry, you can't stay an extra 15 minutes? You can't spend a night where you can't record your favorite television show to watch some other time so you can get face-to-face with someone that you're building a relationship with? I'm not trying to be slapping you on the knuckles with a ruler, I'm just trying to say, we've got a long way to go in investing more of our time. I like to say it this way and I know you're getting bored with the statement but can you go the extra mile? Stay the extra hour? And spend the extra dollar? Christ did all of that for you. And let's just reflect that this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you, no greater love has anyone than this that you lay down your life, just lay down an extra hour or two this week to invest in relationship. (49:41)

Then lastly of course it's going to take effort, number 5. Courage, attention, cheerfulness, time and effort. Let's be generous with our effort. Let's go the extra mile, let's spend the extra time. When there's a conversation on the patio about someone in their life, you get that information, listen if it's important information then go to your car and sit and write it down. Put it in your phone, make a note. If they've got surgery on Thursday or a test on Wednesday put it in your Daytimer and have it come up on your phone and then call them, or text them or pray for them and don't just say, yeah I'll pray for you. Put the effort in. you can't build a relationship on mutual trust, acceptance and concern unless there's effort involved in this. Christ is the template. Well we were still sinners Christ died for us. (50:24)

Alright we've got one minute left so, let me just say this, two more words if you're taking notes to write down, how about this, protector and provider. Protector and provider. Put that at the conclusion at the bottom of your paper. Protector and provider, because you'll need those two words when you start rebuffing this message in your memory. And you'll say, "Well, you know what? The reason I'm fine with my family as my friends and maybe one or two people and that's all I really need because if I were to go and be vulnerable and transparent and open my life up then I might get burned because I've been burned in the past." I don't like this fact but it sure is helpful that I know that as he sat in the upper room, there was a guy sitting in that circle named Judas. Does Jesus know what it is to be betrayed? Absolutely. Does he know what it is to be burned? He's sitting there telling Andrew, love one another and he knows that Judas is not only going to betray Christ but is going to betray the whole group of men and yet he says love one another. Now I understand you're going to lose relationships, there's going to be people that stab you in the back, trust me I know this. I know this. But I've bet you've drunk some water before and had it go down the wrong pipe. Have you all had that experience? Did you give up on water at that point? You haven't had a drink since, have you? No, you cough it up and you try it again, and you did it successfully. I bet you've choked on water more than once. When are you going to learn to stop drinking beverages? And when Satan starts saying to you, you're going to get hurt. Remember God is our protector. And even if we cough up a relationship and it hurts, you've got to get back out there and do it again. You've stubbed your toe on the way to the kitchen, have you not? Have you stopped going in the kitchen? I don't think so. If you've had something blow in your eye outside and you've had to get it out it hurt. You don't go outside anymore. No, you wear goggles out side? What do you do? You wipe it out, you go through the pain and you do it again. (52:26)

He's our protector. How about this? Our provider. Some of you are going to say, if I really take this series and I only know it's going to get worse with Pastor Mike. It's going to get harder, more demanding, sacrificial. Then who's going to care for me? He wants me to be a relational doormat. Remember this, he will be your provider. Jesus said it's better to give than to receive. The Proverbs say, Proverbs 11:25, whoever brings a blessing will himself be enriched and whoever waters other will himself be watered. You don't believe the promise of God, when Satan starts saying it ain't worth it, you're being too selfless, you're opening up your home, they haven't reciprocated. You did that, they haven't done it back, you prayed for them, you texted them, you sent this and they did nothing in return. Just trust me that's a lie from the enemy because eventually you'll recognize there's reciprocity that God will bring, not just from himself in some intangible way. But God is going to give you the reciprocity in those relationships. He will. He may not in every situation but as Luke 14 says when you do something kind for other people, that parable of the banquet, and they can't repay you, God is right there ready to repay as Proverbs 19 verse 17, says you do something for someone that does not reciprocate. God becomes the one who reciprocates. He is our provider, don't sit there and blow this sermon off because you say who's going to care for me. Alright it's lab time.



Let's pray. (53:50)

God I know it was on the heart of our Ministry Leaders and our Pastors. We sat in a meeting and sat there and said what does our church really need right now. And I trust your providential oversight of our leaders, who's hearts were really knit together in this topic thinking we need to talk about friendship. Knowing the Bible had so much to say about this, I was so happy not just to make it a one time, one weekend, one session message but to spend our next three sessions here today and the next two on this topic. We could go on for many more weeks but the idea of this particular need in our lives. Even if it's not a felt need some people in the room I pray that we would see it. As the thing that will not only make our joy complete but make your joy complete because you see us being faithful to do what you've asked us to do. So God I pray that we would be willing to invest in others, it'll be vulnerable, it'll feel risky, we'd open up our minds, we'd open up our lives, we'd open up our meal time, our activity time, our home even, the ultimate sanctuary of our lives, to open it up to others that we might build friendships of mutual trust and concern and acceptance and you might be pleased as you see us loving one another because you've made it very clear in your Word by this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. So, God help us to demonstrate that and the kind of fileo friendship love that you've designed for us to have in our friendships. In Jesus Name. Amen. (55:22)