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**Getting My life Back In Balance**  
***“Getting My Friendships Back in Balance”***  
(Part 3)

**Intro:**

- There is a difference between close friends and casual friends. (explain – casual friends are the result of circumstances many times...work / kids sports / neighbors / BUT, close friends are the result of choice. It takes a conscious choice. They don't just happen.
- The closer I am to a person, the more influence that person has on my life. (Relational fact!) This being true, I'd better be selective.
- We are created by a relational God to be relational beings. God made us for relationships. The greatest commands are relational commands. Therefore, to experience balance relationally, is one of the most important areas of balance we can strive for.
- These principals today are great to be not just for adults, but for your kids as well!

**I. Embrace A Biblical Criteria For Close Friendships**

**A. Know who the Bible tells us to avoid as close friends**

- **WHAT?** The Bible actually tells us to avoid certain people? YES! There are certain people we should avoid as close friends.

*Prov. 12:26 “A righteous man is cautious in friendship...” (NIV)* So, how do we exercise caution?

1. The Bible tells us to avoid people who run away from responsibility

*II Thess. 3:6 “...keep away from every brother who is idle...” (NIV)*

- People can be idle in a lot of ways. You can run from your responsibility to work. You can run from your responsibility in your marriage / with your kids / You can be idle in many ways.
- We are to avoid those who refuse to embrace a sense of responsibility in this life. These are not people you want to be close friends with.
- All I want to do is party and have a good time!

2. The Bible tells us to avoid angry people

*Prov. 22:24-25 “Keep away from angry, short-tempered people. For you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.” (NLT)*

Angry people are poison. They infect others with their anger. Having a short fuse is not the result of being “Irish” or some other lame excuse. It is a spiritual problem,

- 20 years ago there was an angry man who was allowed on a deacon board. (explain) His way to solve issues was a fist fight.

3. The Bible tells us to avoid immoral people

*I Cor. 5:11 “...you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian yet indulges in sexual sin...” (NLT)*

- Sexual sin is just no big deal in our culture today. What happens is that our conviction get eroded / worn down when you have close friends that just blow off what God says about this issue
- Hey, it’s no big deal / It’s not that bad / there are no consequences.

4. The Bible tells us to avoid materialistic people

*Eph. 5:3, 7 “But among you, there must not be even a hint of...greed.” Vs. 7 “Therefore, do not be partners with them.” (NIV)*

- Here’s a tough one for our culture. If I have close friends who are materialistic, I will lose my joy and contentment as a believer. These friendships will cultivate dissatisfaction in you.
- When Lisa and I were first married, we had some friends who all they talked about was money and possessions. (explain) Barrier in friendship.

5. The Bible tells us to avoid unbelievers as close friends

*II Cor. 6:14 “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers...” (NLT)*

- This verse refers to a marriage relationship, but the application can be much broader than that. As a believer, how can I “get in the yoke” with someone who isn’t a Christian?
- It amazes me how many Christians go to unbelievers for advice. What kind of spiritual counsel can you get?

6. The Bible tells us to avoid people who are divisive

*Rom. 16:17 “...Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people’s faith...Stay away from them.” (NLT)*

- I don’t want to sound unloving, but divisive people are cancerous. They never attempt to make things better, they only create conflict.
- Disagreement and divisiveness are different. You can disagree graciously and not affect others. Divisiveness intentionally affects other people in a negative way.
- It is not loving to tolerate divisive people. I have seen way too much of this in over 20 years in ministry. I have seen churches destroyed because of this. At Foothills we have zero tolerance for divisiveness.

7. The Bible tells us to avoid those who gossip

*Prov. 20:19 “Stay away from gossips – they tell everything.” (CEV)*

- Why would you ever want someone who gossips to be a close friend?  
The simple fact is that if they gossip about other people, they will gossip about you!
- Good grief! What am I supposed to do, act like a snob? Of course not! We are commanded to love people. We are not here to condemn them / or judge them as people. I can disapprove of certain behaviors or lifestyles and still love them as people.
- The real issue is about being selective who your close friends are going to be. I have a lot of friends; but I have few close friends. What do I look for?

## B. Know who the Bible tells us to select as close friends

### 1. The Bible tells us to choose people who challenge us mentally

*Prov. 13:20 "Whoever walks with the wise will become wise..." (NLT)*

*Prov. 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." (NLT)*

- I need people in my life who will challenge my thinking not always reinforce my bias's. I need people who can pull me outside my box. people who are growing mentally themselves...not stagnant. People who are not afraid of a little friction. (doesn't mean conflict)
- Are you friends with wise people who are making you wiser? OR are you threatened by new ways of thinking? Close friends should help us grow mentally. (Sam and helping me learn technology – explain)
- Most men have shallow friendships because all they talk about are things like sports / vehicles / hunting / fishing / work / Instead of allowing the conversation to go deeper on the issues of life and be challenged.

### 2. The Bible tells us to choose people who support us emotionally

*Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times..." (NIV)*

*Gal. 6:2 "Share each other's troubles and problems..." (NLT)*

- I need people in my life who will love me regardless of what's going on in my life. Their love for me is completely unconditional. I can be honest about my struggles / failures / faults / and the relationship is unchanged. A friend loves at ALL times.
- I need people close enough to me so they understand me emotionally. After the birth of our second daughter, Lisa and I were really struggling adjusting. We tried to share this in our home group at the time. (share their response)

### 3. The Bible tells us to choose people who strengthen us spiritually

*Heb. 10:24 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds." (NIV)*

- I need people in my life I can fellowship with. Friendship is a function of your mind and emotions. Fellowship is a function of your spirit. Therefore, you can only have fellowship with another believer.
- I need spiritual friendships that literally, “SPUR” me forward in my relationship with Christ. Sometimes I need to be “spurred”. (explain) I need people to remind me of God’s truth / His perspective / His purpose.
- For those of you wondering if the person you’re dating is “the one” for you. If they are not a Christian, the answer is absolutely NO!

How do I go about finding people like this? It seems impossible!

## II. Practice A Biblical Lifestyle To Build Close Friendships

- If you want to develop close friendships that help bring balance to your life, you must get intentional. You must do things that foster these types of friendships.

### A. Be interested in other people

*Prov. 18:1 “Unfriendly people are selfish...” (NCV)*

*Philip. 2:3-4 “Don’t be selfish...Don’t think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and what they are doing.” (NLT)*

1. I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feeling this morning, but if you’re unfriendly, it’s because you’re too busy worrying about yourself, your needs, your feelings, and have little concern for the person next to you.
2. This has nothing to do with being introverted or extroverted. It has everything to do with choosing to be interested in other people and their lives and not just your own! Unfriendly people are self-absorbed people.
3. If you want to develop close friendships, you must demonstrate an interest in the lives of other people. (They’re likes / dislikes / hobbies / family / concerns / fears / their needs / ) Home Group is a great place to work on this

### B. Be happy

*Prov. 15:13 “A glad heart makes a happy face...” (NLT)*

1. II Cor. 3:18 talks about how our faces actually reflect the Lord’s glory. Our countenance actually demonstrates the reality of God in our lives.
2. Joy is a byproduct of our relationship with Christ. Unfortunately, so many Christians have a joyless countenance. Who would you rather go up and talk to...someone looking happy or someone looking grumpy. Many people are just uninviting. (Daughters tell me I can have “the scary look”.)
3. Why not just practice smiling more. It takes 42 muscles to frown and 6 to smile. No wonder some of you are tired all the time! Give those muscles a break and smile!

### C. Be transparent

*Eph. 4:25 “So put away all falsehood and tell your neighbor the truth, because we belong to each other.” (NLT)*

1. We live in a culture that encourages falsehood...encourages keeping up

appearances...maintaining the image. Don't let anyone see the real you. If you live this way, you sentence yourself to loneliness.

2. What I have discovered is that the more transparent I am, the better my relationships become. The more transparent I am, the more people trust me. The more transparent I am, the more relaxed I feel. (nothing to hide)
3. Transparency just makes you a desirable friend. Who wants to be friends with someone who is perfect? I want a flawed person like me!

D. Be positive

*Philip. 2:14 "In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing..." (NLT)*

1. Some people just have a negative spirit about them. Nothing is ever good enough. The first thing out of their mouth is usually a complaint about something. They are quick to argue their point. They always have to be right. They have to have the last word. Never happy about anything.
2. Positive people in our day shine like stars (vs 15 says). They are so different than everyone around them. They are a friend magnet. Who doesn't want to spend time with a positive person.

E. Be a good listener

*James 1:19 "My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak..." (NLT)*

1. The problem with most people is they are lousy listeners. Since God gave us 2 ears and 1 mouth, we should listen twice as much as we talk. Principal: Always seek to understand before seeking to be understood.
2. How do I do this? Learn to ask questions. Asking questions draws out more information and also lets the other person know you are interested in them. (New TV show - guy with the couch in the middle of the street) This show illustrates people long to be heard!

F. Be accepting

*Rom. 15:7 Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified." (NLT)*

1. How does Christ accept us? Unconditionally! Warts / wrinkles / and all! When we accept people like this, God is glorified by our lives. We are reflecting His character.
2. Are you accepting or condemning? Do people have to earn your acceptance or is it freely given? Do you project a spirit of acceptance about yourself?

G. Be affirming

*Eph. 4:29 "...Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." (NLT)*

1. When was the last time someone gave you an encouraging word? Gave you a compliment...showed some appreciation? How did that make you feel? Affirmation is powerful!

2. Have you affirmed anyone today? Have you spoken any word of encouragement to someone this morning? Let's do it right now!!!

H. Be emotional

*Rom. 12:15 "When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow." (NLT)*

1. You don't have a lot of close friends if you act like Spok. We need to engage emotionally with people. This means you share in their happiness and sorrow. (Kids come home with a good grade / some success – do you celebrate it with them? What about their pain? Do you blow it off?)
2. God created us as emotional beings and we must relate to people emotionally if we expect to have close friends. Some of you keep your emotions so much in check that people can't relate to you. It's OK to feel!

I. Be committed

*Prov. 18:24 "There are friends who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother." (NLT)*

1. You usually discover who your real friends are when things go bad. Who are the ones committed to you no matter what? I call these unconditional friendships / covenant friendships. / They are based upon a commitment – a promise to be friends no matter what.
2. They are friends like David and Jonathon in I Samuel.

J. Be spiritual

*Col. 3:1 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (NLT)*

1. You will attract spiritual friends as you live a spiritual life. Do you live out your faith in all the areas of your life? Do you verbalize your faith? Do you talk about it? / Share your spiritual experiences with others? Do you share how God is coming through for you.
2. Some of you have shared with me how God has provided financial resources as we pursue our KAC fund. I hope you're telling other people. LOOK what God has done!
3. This will attract other spiritually minded people looking for the same thing!