

Theme: Relationships die from neglect if we do not realize their importance and work through relationships to keep them healthy.

I. Into the Wild

- A. Movie about man named Christopher McCandless
- B. Graduated from college but wanted to escape hypocrisy
- C. Travelled farther and farther west and to remote areas
- D. Goes to Alaska to get away from it all, survive by himself
- E. Wrote many thoughts during this time - among them:
- F. Happiness only real when shared.
- G. Utterly unprepared, tries to hike out, can't, and eventually starves and dies
- H. A modern parable of the futility of isolation

II. Spotting the Relationship of Slip Sliding Away

- A. Isolation is a sad state; we need to share life with others
There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"
This too is meaningless — a miserable business!
Ecclesiastes 4:8
 - 1. The write of Ecclesiastes is showing us emptiness
 - 2. A person all alone - emptiness - even if successful!
- B. But relationships are hard - sometimes isolation seems easier
 - 1. Relationships require us to be vulnerable

- 2. They require us to control our tongue and forgive
- 3. God uses them to show us our own flaws - scary!
- 4. So sometimes we just let relationships slip away
And I know a father
Who had a son
He longed to tell him all the reasons
For the things he'd done
He came a long way
Just to explain
He kissed his boy as he lay sleeping
Then he turned around and headed home again

He's slip slidin' away
Slip slidin' away
You know the nearer your destination
The more you're slip slidin' away (Paul Simon)
- 5. A huge danger for all us - just slip into isolation
- 6. Faced with the work, we choose one of 50 ways to leave!

III. Avoiding the Relationship of Slip Sliding Away

- A. To stay engaged in relationships we must know they are worth it!
Two are better than one... Ecclesiastes 4:9
 - 1. We must remind ourselves why we need relationships
 - 2. Especially during tough times of relationships!
- B. Why we need relationships
 - 1. Relationships give us more return from our toil in life

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: Ecclesiastes 4:9

- a. Life has toil - our work is under the curse
 - b. Can't avoid this, but relationships bring better return
 - c. The principle of synergy (working together!)
2. Others pick us up when we fall down and need help
Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: ¹⁰ If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecclesiastes 4:9–10
- a. We will all stumble and fall; who will pick us up?
 - b. Isolation is a pitiable place - no one to help
 - c. It is too late after we fall - must have relationships prior to that point
3. Friends keep love for Christ warm in cold world
Two are better than one, because... ¹¹ if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Ecclesiastes 4:9, 11
- a. Obviously true in physical sense, but important point
 - b. Travelers on a cold night need heat or can die
 - c. The same is true spiritually - and we live in a cold world
Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, Matthew 24:12
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24–25

1. In this wicked age love can grow cold

2. We need to be with others to be spurred on in love

4. Friends provide protection in battle

Two are better than one, because ... ¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12

- a. Two people can watch each others back!
- b. We are in a battle, and we need others to protect us
- c. Ephesians 6:10-18 - verbs and pronouns plural; armor only works in a unit!

5. God commands great blessing on relationships!

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ² It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. ³ It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. **For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.** Psalms 133

- a. Good relationships are pleasant and anointed
- b. There God COMMANDS blessing
 1. 'Bestows' is too weak - אִצְוָה means "command"
 2. A blessing reserved for relationships!

IV. Regaining Your Foothold

- A. We must realize the danger of slipping away & meditate on the value of relationships
 1. We will regularly experience relationships!

2. Therefore we must remind ourselves of the value of relationships
3. We must know in our gut that we were created for relationships
4. We must know in our gut that relationships make life better

B. We must decide to not slip slide away

1. Relationships are uncomfortable and difficult
2. We must not give into the temptation to just walk away
3. We need to make the effort to rebuild - a note, a call, lunch, etc
4. Don't just slip slide away!

V. Applying the Word

A. Walking through relationships

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:18-19

1. If it is possible - sometimes others won't stay close
2. As far as it depends on you - we can't control the other person
3. As far as it depends on you - we must do all we can
 - a. We must not live by manipulation, acting as if we or they are God
 - b. We must control our tongue - even if they don't

- c. We must be open, real, and vulnerable, and encourage them to be as well
- d. We must forgive as we have been forgiven - even if they will not

4. Live at peace with everyone - we must do our part to live in peace with all

- a. This is the goal - who wants stress and strife?
- b. We want God's shalom to characterize our relationships - and we will do all we can to see it

B. A prayer for shalom filled relationships

Slip Sliding Away

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

May 25, 2014

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: ¹⁰ If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12