

SALT CO.
9.24.23

Recognizing a Shut Down
"In your face there is fullness of joy."
Psalm 16:11

Welcome back to the third season of the SALT CO!

This is a place for Seasoned Adults to gather regularly, to refresh, retool, and refuel as they (we) navigate the ever-changing TERRAIN along Route 60+.

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we've lived a lot of seasons of life
 BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

...we become a new creation...transformed and *transforming* for the rest of our lives.

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

So, we call this the SALT CO...

Notice the helmets and the weights. This is a construction site where we are also **ADDING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF** a gymnasium for us to work on our **spiritual fitness** in order to practice the **fine art of eldering!**

We believe that eldering as a "FINE ART" requires SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

What do we mean by "maturity"?

"The ability to handle emotional weight is at the core of what it means to be mature. You can tell the most mature person in any setting, not by who has the most degrees or the highest status but by who can handle the most emotional weight without being triggered."

And that's part of what we hope this series will help us to do!

This fall we're going to dive into a powerful truth:
God is the most Joyful Being in the universe *and*...God wants us joy full.

Today at CCC we are raising up our second Core Value, God's People Delight in God's Word. In our 2030 Vision we say, "*We see a church filled with disciples who both know and love the Word of God.*" Like the person in this photo... celebrating the God who loves us and so speaks to us in His word!

"In your face there is fullness of joy."
Psalm 16:11

LAST SALT CO we kicked off our Fall series based on the theme of **JOY using the book:** by Christian counselor: Chris Coursey, The Joy Switch

Don't worry if you *were not here last time*...or if you've *not yet had a chance to pick up a copy of the book that we ordered for you with a nice discount!* \$10 bucks-*the price of 2 Latte's!*

You'll get more from the series if you read the book and try the exercises for each chapter... **BUT** even if you just come and hear the highlights we share each SALT CO and the conversations around the tables...we intend for there to be good food for thought for everyone.

Chris Coursey is basing all of his work using the definition of joy that emerged out of years of research by neuroscientist Dr. Alan Schore and others at UCLA.

Schore's research on the human brain revealed that our brains are created to run on JOY. And further—that JOY IS BEST DEFINED AS THE RELATIONAL experience of encountering others who communicate verbally and non-verbally that "they are glad-to-be-together- with us."

We see this quality of JOY **throughout scripture.**

In JOY SWITCH Coursey draws on insights from brain science to introduce people to our brain's "relational circuit" (a.k.a. our social engagement system) that determines the quality of all of our relationships. When it's working-we have access to all of our relational skills.

Joy is both the KEY to activating our RELATIONAL CIRCUIT and the FUEL that keeps it FUNCTIONING at full capacity! But in real life...let's be honest...for all of us there are times when our JOY runs low...and our relational circuits sputter and even go offline...and that's what we're going to talk about today.

Example of our Bistro lights one night began to blink on and off, and then off completely!

Today we want to learn how to recognize a shut down...and what we can do about it! So we have three goals for this series:

Three Goals

- 1. Learn to recognize when your relational circuit is not working**
- 2. Know how to use the Joy Switch to turn it back on**
- 3. Learn relational habits to sustain the relational circuit in the ON position**

We have a friend who is an electrician. I told him about the flickering lights on our Bistro. "Let's take a look at the wires in the switch..."

So, let's take a look under the hood so to speak,...what does this "relational circuit or engine "look like" and "how does it work"?"

Obviously this is a very simple model of the most complex information processing system in the universe—next to God and the "heavenly hosts"...but there is enough here to give us useful insights about relational capacities...

Our relational circuit is made up of four levels that Coursey describes on pages 49 and 50 of ***Joy Switch*** as 4 different work-stations.

LEVEL 1--ATTACHMENT: The attachment center where we securely (or insecurely) attach to people who share joy and let us rest.

a. Example: *I bond with the person who is consistently glad to be with me, who lets me rest when I need to.*

b. Location: *Thalamus and nucleus accumbens*

c. Note how Paul opens some of his letters, affirming this most basic relational (attachment= “I am glad to be with you”) level: Phil. 1:3-6;

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you...”

Col. 1:3-6; I Thess. 1: 2-7; II Tim. 1: 3-5. He then builds on this trust (secure to risk). Why is this so important? We need to feel we are connected in order to learn, grow, risk.

LEVEL 2—ASSESSMENT: The guard shack where we watch for opportunities to approach and connect, or fearfully avoid when something threatens our joy. Here is our brain’s survival circuit, which is our “self-preservation” center, in charge of the fight, flight, and freeze response.

a. Example: *If I touch a hot stove, I quickly move my hand without thinking about it.*

b. Location: *Amygdala*

LEVEL 3---ATTUNEMENT: The emotional regulator where we stay connected in high-energy joy states and coast to low-energy quiet states. Here we use the correct amount of energy to maintain our interactions. We learn to return to joy when distressing emotions arise.

a. Example: *I walk into the room and notice you are napping so I lower my voice and move quietly.*

b. Location: *Cingulate cortex*

LEVEL 4---ACTION: The brain’s “captain,” who oversees our ability to use the best of our brain’s resources so we stay creative, purposeful, goal-directed, thoughtful, and resourceful. We act like our true, relational selves using all the best expressions of our identity when Level 4 is running.

+Mark L laying hands on his challenging young son's head saying, "Come Pre-frontal cortex!"

a. Example: *In every situation my Level 4 focuses on staying my relational self whether I am joyful, sad, angry, hurt, or distressed. The Level 4 asks, "How do I best reflect my character and identity in this situation?"*

b. Location: *Prefrontal cortex*

These 4 levels are like the relational circuitry of our "social engagement system"

WHEN ALL OF THESE LEVELS are "online" (imagine this like your Router indicator lights...when they are all green you've got access to the internet!)

...starting at birth when the baby and mother start by gazing and smiling and cooing and responding...the circuitry is literally programmed through relational interactions and that developmental process continues for the rest of our lives and is the source of our CHARACTER FORMATION and IDENTITY.

Another of CCC core value is spot on- "life change happens through relationships"

BUT---WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE LIGHTS FLICKER/OUR RELATIONAL CIRCUIT BREAKER GOES OFF?

***AWARENESS CAN LEAD TO REMEDY**

This is powerful: WE CAN ASSESS the STATUS OF OUR RELATIONAL CIRCUIT!

Coursey uses the helpful acronym C.A.K.E. (on page 53) to check if our relational engine is sputtering, or to put it differently, to help us assess whether our relational circuit is ON or OFF.

When you notice things are "OFF" it's like a warning light on your dashboard.

How do we go "offline"?

+Circumstances or people that remind us of the pain of the past take us offline

+Fatigue, disappointment, feeling alone, feeling misunderstood, unprotected, low blood sugar, interacting with someone who doesn't let us rest, make it difficult to stay relational (Ps. 7).

When we go off-line we lose our ability to “keep the relationship BIGGER than the Problems” which requires access to our relational skills. We can get stuck.

We go into what Christian psychologist and neurotheologian Dr. Jim Wilder coined as “enemy mode”. When we are in any KIND of Enemy Mode—we are relationally restricted. (page 32)

The first KIND of ENEMY MODE Coursey cites is: Simple/Stupid enemy mode.

- I. SIMPLE ENEMY MODE- This is like your relational circuit drifting into “Airplane mode” ...*you know: that feature on your phone that takes it offline.*
- II. and not able to take in new data during the flight.
Simple enemy mode could be ignoring bids for connection from others b/c we're locked onto our screens. Maybe we withdraw from hot energy reactions that triggers feelings of rejection or bring back painful memories.

-Review the Simple Enemy Mode Checklist at your tables for this most common form of enemy mode (we ALL get here).

Read SIMPLE ENEMY MODE CHECKLIST. (p. 67)

- +I just want to make a problem, person, or feeling go away
- +I don't want to listen to what others feel or say
- +My mind is “locked onto” something upsetting
- +I don't want to be connected to _____(Someone I usually like).
- +I just want to get away or fight or freeze
- +I more aggressively interrogate, judge, and fix other people

Biblical examples: I Cor. 1:10ff, *“It has been reported to me... that there are quarrels among you...”* (resulted in factions in the church).

II. STUPID ENEMY MODE (note this is not in Joy Switch)-{like obsessions devices] high energy, hot anger, road rage, anger we regret later, needs quieting, take a walk, when we feel thwarted, problem feels outrageously big Ps. 58:6-8; Eph. 4:26f, *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil...Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful...”*

*So, neuroscience tells us the relational circuit runs on joy. The desire to share glad-to-be-together joy makes the relational circuit turn on and stay on. By the way this is what the apostle Paul is calling on the Philippians to do, to return to joy from being in “enemy mode” over some unknown conflict centering around two women leaders, Euodia and Syntyche. He famously writes, **“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!”** Where to re-joyce is return to joy.*

THE KEY:

*Here is the best news of all: **each of us is a keeper of the key to activate our relational circuit.***

The Joy Switch, pp. 46-47

As we continue in this series we are going to explore *HOW* “The joy switch activates the key steps or habits to turn the relational circuit back on.”

Let’s go to our tables now.

I have a suggestion for you at home: Read Psalm 22 and look for what goes into the psalmist returning to joy. Then read Hebrews 12:1-4!

TABLE TALK—

1. Introduce yourself and share a “glad-to-be-together relational moment” from this week.
2. Table guide read the section on Predatory Enemy Mode from pages 57-58 and page 62.
3. Review the check list for Simple Enemy Mode on p. 67. Invite experiences people had when they went into “airplane mode”.

4. Here is an exercise using a Joy Switch habit (appreciation and gratitude) to (re) activate your relational circuit:
 - a. Think of (one, two or three) things in your life you feel thankful for right now. These may be people, pets, experiences, or shared moments with loved ones. If you are willing, please share one of these at your table. Notice how you feel as you reflect on these gifts.

WRAP UP Go over Key Tag:

1. Each of us is a keeper of the key to activate our relational circuit. Remember you are working on this with the help of His Spirit (Phil. 2:12-13). We help each other return and remain in joy. By the same token we also have the ability to “kill joy” in others.
2. For today:
 - a. Use C.A.K.E. (how you can tell your relational circuit is “on”).
3. Rest of this series JOY SWITCH will focus on going back “online” (C.A.R.S.)

When our relational circuits are fully on we are in

COMPASSIONATE RELATIONAL MODE

- +Feel curious (want to know) about what the other is experiencing right now
- +I desire to share what the other person is feeling at this moment
- +I feel protective of them
- +The other person feels like one of my people
- +Relationships feel more important than the problem
- +I feel aware of God’s presence

God is the most joyful Being in the universe. And God has made us in His image! Our brains are wired that way! Because God wants us to be joy full!

We invite you to take some next steps:

1. If you are following along with the reading or you want to pick up a copy of Joy Switch it’s available here or at Book Store
2. Read chapter 3

3. This week NOTICE WHERE YOU CAN COMMUNICATE “GLAD TO BE TOGETHER JOY” WITH OTHERS AS YOU GO THROUGH YOUR WEEK
4. Start a Roundtable (Fall Menu coming soon)