

SALT CO.
10/8/23

Get Back on Track!

"Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people."

Luke 2:10

Welcome back to the third season of the SALT CO!

Share a "glad-to-be-together- joy" from your week.

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 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. One indicator of spiritual maturity we are focusing on this FALL is: the ability to handle emotional weight...*without becoming triggered*.

*"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."

In our fall series-- we're exploring these powerful truths:

- 1) God is the most Joyful Being in the universe *and...*
- 2) JOY is key to our spiritual maturity! [*hold up key!]

We are learning WHY God wants us joy full!

Scripture is *full* of evidence that God wants us *full of joy*. For example, the angels announcing Jesus' birth declare,

"Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." Luke 2:10

This Fall we are doing a series exploring the book: The Joy Switch, by Christian Counselor Chris Coursey.

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 from our bookstore—they are still available for the discounted cost of 10 bucks!= the price of a gallon and half of gas.*

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 you can easily join in the conversations at each SALT CO gathering.

Chris Coursey is basing all of his work on **a specifically RELATIONAL definition of joy** that emerged out of the brain science research by Dr. Alan Schore and others at UCLA.

Call it: the experience of *glad-to-be-together-joy*

Glad-to-be-together-joy is conveyed non-verbally and verbally through:

facial expression
tone of voice

posture
gesture
timing
and intensity

Schore's research revealed that the human brain is DESIGNED to be FUELED by JOY. JOY is THAT important!!

Our capacity for JOY is evident right out of the womb. As one researcher said, "we come into this world looking for someone who is looking for us" ...and we never stop looking for that experience. *In fact...it is through relating to others eye to eye, face to face that the circuitry that runs our brain's social engagement system is wired and programmed for use!*

Pastoral counselors Dr. Marcus Warner and Chris Coursey help clarify this particular definition of JOY,

"Not all pleasure is relational. ***But all JOY is relational.*** Whether we feel that joy by remembering the past, anticipating the future, or experiencing the present, there is a relational component to joy; and it is that relational component that separates mere pleasure from real joy."

The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled People, Marcus Warner and Chris Coursey, p.35

So far in our series we've seen that our relational circuit (or SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM) is made up of four levels **primarily in the right hemisphere of our brain.**

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*

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.

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 four "workstations" are like the *circuitry* that keeps our SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM functioning. The social engagement system is what shapes our uniquely human capacities for relating to God and to other...and when it's working—and all the workstations are "online" it's like having relational superpowers!

BUT...the thing is, as we discussed last week, many things can cause us to go "offline" and put us in a relationally restricted state!

Dr. Jim Wilder coined the term “enemy mode” to describe the two different modes of “offline” brain states.

Thanks to Coursey and other researchers-we’ve got some diagnostic **Dashboard Tools** we can learn to use to recognize when that happens.

Just like in our cars when the wrench appears...or the engine light...we take out our manual from the glove compartment right?!

Our social engagement system manual says: if certain indicator lights flash on our “social engagement system dashboard” we know we are in some form of enemy mode AND we need to USE our **JOY SWITCH TOOL KIT** to activate our relational circuitry and get that relational engine online again.

And as we will see in a minute: that’s where JOY comes in!

AWARENESS can be curative!

Here’s a list of some of the INDICATOR LIGHTS that **warn us** that our relational circuitry needs a RE-BOOT:

SIMPLE/STUPID ENEMY MODE CHECKLIST

- +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

Coursey (p. 72) further describes some of the behaviors we might display when we are in simple/stupid enemy mode:

-We attack others- or ourselves. We become impatient and demanding. We feel stuck in our pain.

-Some of us turn on ourselves when we lose our (air quotes)

“glad-to-be-together- joy”. We beat ourselves up. We blame, shame, or call ourselves a failure.

-We withdraw.

-Old recordings (habitual negative self-talk patterns) play in our mind.

*At your tables last week you ALSO read about a second enemy mode brain state called: PREDATORY enemy mode...and the unique indicators when the attachment station in our relational circuitry malfunctions. You can look on pages 57 and 62 to review this less common form of enemy mode.

Our FOCUS this week is to glean the wisdom in chapter 3 and pull out the JOY SWITCH keys and practice using them!

We begin with own returning to joy. The CARS Joy Switch habits help us return to relational mode.

+CONNECTION- *I connect with the things and people who stabilize me*

It can be a memory of a past experience, something or someone in the present, or anticipation of something or someone in the future.

Glad-to-be-together-joy is stabilizing.

Glad-to-be-together-joy is sometimes a high energy-relational experience like a reunion with a loved one who just landed at the airport, but it also includes relief and rest...like someone who is there with us after some bad news lands unexpectedly. That can be a *glad-to-be-together* moment too.

Jesus was a JOY-MEISTER in every kind of human situation he engaged. Let's watch this clip from ***The Chosen*** of an encounter with someone who had been deprived of the experience of “glad-to-be-together-joy” for a very long time...

What were you experiencing as you watched this?

Unpack what happens in the leper, in the others, joy! Healing and glad-to-be-together-joy “WITHNESS”. Jesus approaches when no one else will. They have all been trained to be terrified. Jesus looks into this man’s face, touches him. He demonstrates to his friends what it looks like to restore connection. Notice Jesus also instructs the leper what to do to be re-connected with his community. This is how Jesus “heals” us in Mind, body, heart, soul and relationship.

Maybe we haven’t had leprosy, but maybe something else makes us feel like it’s been a long time since someone said to us, “I am glad to be with you!” We all know this.

Jesus came to remove all the barriers that keep us from God’s glad to be together joy! He opens the way for us to be capable of glad-to-be-together-joy with each other!

+APPRECIATION-*I appreciate the people and experiences that make me smile and feel loved*

+REST-*I catch my breath and quiet to feel calmed and refreshed*

+SHALOM MY BODY-*I practice exercises to infuse peace throughout my mind and body.*

These four are the tools that are key to activating joy in our brains which shift us out of enemy mode and bring our social engagement system back on-line and our C.A.K.E. indicator lights restored.

SLIDE OF C.A.K.E.

Curiosity

Appreciation

Kindness

Eye Contact

Let’s talk about this...

TABLE TALK

1. Introduce yourself and glad to be together moment past or future.
2. **“Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.”** Luke 2:10 How does the video clip demonstrate this?
3. Come up with 2-3 qualities you appreciate about someone in your life. Be as specific as you are able and share these with your table. (Example: *The person I’m thinking about is an amazing listener, she helps me find the words to describe what I’m feeling, and she’s so patient!*)
4. *“Connecting with what stabilizes also includes remembering comforting moments, appreciation moments, beholding beauty”.* Describe a time in your day or week when you notice that your relational circuit is “on”. Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with? This is too vague...it would be different week to week day to day...

This weekend at CCC we’re focusing on our fourth “Core Value”, FOUND PEOPLE FIND PEOPLE. In our 2030 Vision we see a church filled with disciples who are energized by the mission of introducing unsaved neighbors, family, colleagues and friends to Jesus.”

Think about this. There are 2.2 billion Christians in the world today.

“Joy starts with us. We are almost one third of the world’s population. If all the Christians were joy starters, we would only have to reach two people each to have the whole world full of joy. Joy is the birthright of the followers of Jesus and the deepest desire of the human brain. Joy should catch fire if we could learn to 1) build joy, 2) return to joy when something goes wrong and 3) see others the way that God sees them.” (Joy Starts Here, p. 193)

His joy is contagious!