

SALT CO.
10/22/23

“Removing Roadblocks”

“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1b-2

Welcome to the SALT CO!

Anyone new with us this morning? We are SO glad you are here!

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.

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...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 so that** we have the EMOTIONAL MATURITY REQUIRED FOR THE **fine art of eldering!**

This season we're learning that God is the most joy full Being in the universe AND SINCE WE ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE...

- God wants you and me joy full to overflowing because,
- Joy is contagious!

SO! Let's start with some singing!

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS

So, we're in WEEK 4 and CHAPTER 4 of our fall series exploring the book: The Joy Switch, by Christian Counselor Chris Coursey.

Copies of the book are still available from our bookstore—for only ten bucks, the price of a bag of Halloween candy!

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 you can easily glean what you need to join in the conversations at each SALT CO gathering.

We won't be able to do a full recap of the last 3 SALT CO'S but let's refresh our memories before we dive into today's theme of "removing roadblocks" to JOY.

So far, we've learned:

1. That brain science confirms what we have always been told in God's word, that we are made for joy—
 - a. **specifically we're using a RELATIONAL definition of joy** that emerged out of the brain science research by Dr. Alan Schore and others at UCLA that goes like this: *"Joy is the twinkle we see in someone's eye that says 'I'm glad to be with you!'"*

2. *When Joy is low or absent we go “off line” like a light switch dims and goes OFF. In the language of auto mechanics, our relational engine sputters or even conks out.*
3. *When our joy switch goes off line we relate out of a restricted state called Enemy Mode. We have been learning how to recognize when we’re in enemy mode (review checklist in JOY SWITCH)*
4. Glad to be together Joy is like a “switch” that fires our relational engine for all interactions.
5. *Maturity is the capacity to remain relational even under STRAIN/STRESS/when we hit the inevitable ROADBLOCKS along Route 60+.*

Growing and Sustaining JOY SO THAT we can REMAIN RELATIONAL is not a “cake walk” is it?? We all run into barriers.

Tell the story of our return at night from Fontainebleau to our friends’ apartment in Creteil in south of Paris. We had carefully written directions on how to find our way back. But then we came upon a “detour” sign. I felt a tightening in my stomach as I turned off the freeway (autoroute) onto an unfamiliar side road. That road led to *another* detour leading us further from our destination. We discovered there were no more detour signs to direct us *back* onto our original route. Around 1:00 in the morning we found ourselves going in circles in a roundabout with no idea where to turn. It’s a bad feeling.

We’re traveling on the Route 60+ and the terrain can get confusing and difficult. Maybe sometimes we feel lost.

In fact, Route 60 + can be a rough road, like this:

In chapter 4 Coursey takes us deeper into understanding why learning to build and sustain our joy levels is so HARD to do!

There are all manner things that exhaust our JOY levels and cause our relational engine to sputter, our relational circuit go offline! You know....stuff like:

Recurring arguments
 Feelings of rejection
 Minor annoying grievances
 Alcohol and other substances
 Fatigue
 Physical pain
 Low blood sugar
 Someone's tone of voice (!)
 Sudden reminders of unresolved pain from the past that sneak into our present and trigger old feelings.

You and I could add to this list.

When we experience these kinds of things Coursey suggests we are hitting *roadblocks*. He names five major categories we all encounter that can make it very hard to stay ONLINE relationally:

ROAD BLOCK #1 THREATS TO SELF

Tell story of white rhino on road on a rainy night in Kenya. "Why are we stopping?" The driver pointed straight ahead. In the distance, through the rain I saw what he was pointing at, a huge white rhino standing in the middle of the road, staring at our headlights. I whispered, "what should we do?" The driver said, CALMLY, "We don't move... we wait..."

Any time we feel threatened the brain's survival circuit (at the level of the amygdala) kicks into high gear. We are ready to fight, flee or freeze.

Suzanne reminded me that we all took courage from our driver's experience and wisdom. We connected with his calming presence. Last time we talked about connecting with someone, something that stabilizes us when we feel threat.

At each of these roadblocks Coursey has us ask a question. I think this is wise. When we ask these questions we take a short step back from our reaction to the roadblock in order to think on how to respond rather than just "react".

The question at Roadblock #1 is; *“What threats or fears hinder your relational circuit?”*

The psalmist knows what this is like. Just soak in these words from Psalm 91:1-6; 14-16. (Write down Psalm 73 and Romans 8:31-39 too). More to say about this in a bit...

That night stuck in that roundabout we came across some rough looking characters in a car by the side of road eyeing us. We prayed! And then we picked one of the ways out. Thankfully it was the right road! We were SO glad when we arrived at our friends' home.

ROAD BLOCK #2 UNPROCESSED PAIN

Coursey talks about trauma and the scars that remain after. Counsellors say there are two kinds of trauma. The first is A Trauma, which are painful absences, the lack of being loved, the lack of joy, not receiving enough healthy touch, not having our emotional, physical and mental needs met.

B Trauma are bad things that should never have happened. This comes from abuse of all kinds, of cataclysm, war (so we are praying for these dangerous times and places in the Middle East as well as in Eastern Europe.

When we have either or both in our lives our ability to live relationally can be impacted. Thing is we all have trauma! If trauma remains unprocessed it finds its way, it “sneaks” into our present experiences. We react without fully understanding why.

Coursey writes,

“Overreactions in the present are often connected to past pain that keep us in enemy mode. These reactions can be the bread crumb trail to help us identify our pain so we can heal.”

So Coursey asks,

“Where does unprocessed pain rob you? Where do you see oversized reaction in yourself and the people around you?”

I love the scene in John 21 of Jesus with Peter at breakfast on the beach where, with the smell of a coal fire wafting-the same word used in John to describe the coal fire outside Caiaphas' house, the scene of Peter's denial of Jesus- that same smell collapsing time, taking Peter back. Peter re-members and re-experiences a traumatic moment when he denied Jesus three times. But this time Jesus is right there with him in that experience, healing Peter of incapacitating shame by Peter seeing Jesus' face-that unexpectedly SHOW'S PETER THAT HE IS GLAD-TO-BE-TOGETHER-WITH HIM AGAIN even as he re-lives that experience at the fire in Caiaphas' courtyard. Jesus has Peter paying attention to Him rather than his own shame to create a *new* memory. Jesus restores Peter's joy, and his purpose in life.

Jesus helps Peter CONNECT with His steadying love.

Jesus does this for you and me.

ROADBLOCK #3 LOSS

It will take a crew to get around this one...just the way we need help to get through the experience of many kinds of losses

Coursey tells us loss is the toughest roadblock of the five. Hardest condition for the relational circuit stay on. Loss, or "attachment pain", is what we feel with rejection, abandonment, isolation, death, divorce and other situations where we feel alone or lose something important to us.

We can be propelled to use pseudo-joys (BEEPS) for comfort.

Coursey asks,
"Where does loss or the fear of loss run your life?"

I think of Jesus from the cross giving his friend (probably John) to his mother, and his mother to his friend. Jesus taking care of them in their loss.

He does the same for us.

Some things to think with about overcoming the roadblock of loss:

-Most of the pronouns in the New Testament are PLURAL! “You” should be translated most of the time as “all y’all”. We. Us. The point is we are called into life together in the new community of Jesus. This has to be made real especially when we hit this roadblock

1. Begin with counselling, look at this as a cast on your arm. Set up some one on one time with a trained person- just for a while- to begin to take down this roadblock of feeling alone in loss.

2. Grief Share has been a huge blessing for many suffering loss of a loved one. Many in this room know about this wonderful ministry. Let me know if you want more information.

3. Small groups are here! And ready! I know because I checked. You could be in a small group in two weeks! Let Mary or me know if you’re interested...

ROADBLOCK #4. PHYSICAL NEEDS

How well we care of ourselves contributes to our ability to stay relational! We’re talking about diet, exercise, sleep, spiritual practices, our own mental health needs!

We have SO much more information available to us about the mind-body connection. Research has shown that we have a *head-brain; heart-brain and a gut brain!*

Ask, “What sorts of physical needs or weaknesses send you spiraling into enemy mode.?”

I have back issues as many here also do. So does Chris Coursey. When I don’t stretch, or I do something to hurt my back, the pain makes me “short fused”.

When Jesus said, “*I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance*” the word in the Greek for life is ZOE, the root of our word zoology. It refers to heart, soul, mind and physical body LIFE!!

As well as relationships, which brings us to the last roadblock,

ROADBLOCK #5. MISSING RELATIONAL SKILLS

We all need to use relational skills to recover when things go wrong so we stay our best selves during pressure and strain. So we remain resilient and stay who we are in good times and bad.

The question to ask is, *“What relational skills are missing, hindering my ability to stay relational?”*

This is a good place to meet Chris Coursey who has been working on training in Nineteen Relational Skills. Here is a four-minute video introduction. Let me point out here that your Table Guide Sheet has the information on how to see his brief intros to all nineteen skills.

Here is the KEY to how to overcome these roadblocks.

HOLD UP THE KEY. We need to learn to practice CARS. Then we can help others feel connected, seen, soothed, safe and secure.

1. *We went over the “C” in CARS- connection. Connecting with Christ! With those who “stabilize us” keeps us engaged others who love us, who care about us. We can say we “borrow” bandwidth from people who are relational, who can listen, help us feel understood so we can begin to return to relational mode ourselves.*

Today we move to the “A” in CARS- APPRECIATION.

Coursey calls this “packaged joy” where we “unwrap” our joy gifts.

Re-membering and feeling appreciation activates our relational circuit. Appreciation and gratitude generates the JOY “spark” to fire up our relational engine. **SWITCH ON JOY SWITCH**

Gratitude is powerful.

Let's go to our tables and share some APPRECIATION!

TABLE TALK

- 1) **Share a time when you were driving and you hit some kind of ROADBLOCK**
- 2) **Play the Alphabet of Appreciation Game. Beginning with "A" go around and think of an appreciation you have from the past, you are having in the present, or one that you are anticipating in the future. DO TRY THIS AT HOME!**

Reflect on what it was like to share appreciations. It's very difficult to feel appreciative and anxious or angry at the same time. With appreciation comes calm.

Yes, but how?

1. Make a list of the moments, people and things we appreciate that provides a useful tool when our relational circuit starts to dim SHOW DIMMER SWITCH. Give each of these memories a name. These are (some) of your Emmanuel Moments.
2. Pull out your phone and scroll through some photos of these moments. This sparks a reaction in our own brain and body where we RE-LIVE those moments!

We can identify appreciation/gratitude we have for people, places, events in our past, that we are experiencing now, and what we are anticipating in the future.

Gratitude literally changes our brains! This is our relational oxygen. Here is the point: Put your own mask on first!!

PUT YOUR OWN MASK ON *FIRST*

Our calling as elders is remain relational! We're not called to try and fix other people.

Our Lord knows all about roadblocks.

It's why HE came...to remove the ROADBLOCK AT THE ROOT OF EVERY SINGLE RELATIONAL ROADBLOCK WE WILL EVER FACE...THE SIN THAT SEPARATED ALL OF MANKIND FROM the GLAD TO BE TOGETHER JOY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER THAT GOD CREATED US FOR!

Our theme verse comes from Hebrews, written to encourage Christians who were hitting roadblocks

“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1b-2

- The roadblock Jesus faced was the full force of evil working fear, shame, suffering, separation, aloneness, helplessness, despair and death. All that the evil one brings against humankind, brought with full force against Jesus.
- What brought our Lord through that barrier was JOY. The same joy He wants now to give to each of us here today.
- The author of Hebrews shares this with us, by the leading of His Spirit in order that, his words, “we not grow weary or lose heart.”

So that we elder well!