

SALT CO.

11/12/23

“How to Stay Relational”

*“How very good and pleasant it is
When kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
Running down upon the beard,
On the beard of Aaron,
Running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon
Which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
Life forevermore.*

Ps. 133

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Col. 3:15-17

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+.

...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...

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.

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,
- His joy is contagious!

SO! Let's start with some singing!

We're now in Week 5 of our fall series exploring the book: The Joy Switch by Christian counselor Chris Coursey.

Copies of the book are still available for the price of a latte with a pretty tree pattern in the foam served on a silver platter with a ball of chocolate-covered licorice on the side. In other words for ten bucks you can have your own copy of this very helpful little book! So far we've sold 115 copies!! Get your copy at the Book Store.

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

Here are some of the highlights of what we've been learning about how to *KNOW, GROW and SUSTAIN JOY* in our lives:

1. That brain science confirms what we have always been told in God's word, that we are made for the RELATIONAL experience of being "the sparkle in someone's eye that says to us "I'm glad to be with you."
2. This glad-to- be-together-Joy functions in the brain like a "switch" that fires up our relational engine.
3. *When our glad-to-be-together- Joy levels are low or depleted, our relational engine can sputter and even stop functioning... We can slip into one of the 3 types of ENEMY MODE.*
4. *Maturity is the capacity to remain relational even under STRAIN/STRESS/when we hit the inevitable ROADBLOCKS on the ever-changing terrain along Route 60+.*

Last time we looked at five roadblocks:

ROAD BLOCK #1 THREATS TO SELF

Our fight, flee, freeze response to threat can puts us in enemy mode.

ROAD BLOCK #2 UNPROCESSED PAIN

Last time we talked about two kinds of trauma, A Trauma are painful absences, lack of being loved, not having emotional needs met. B Trauma are bad things that should never have happened. Unresolved trauma finds its way into the present and can even influence how we anticipate the future.

ROAD BLOCK #3 LOSS

The feeling of being alone, when we lose someone or something important to us. This can be the feeling of rejection, abandonment that can propel us into seeking pseudo-joys.

ROAD BLOCK #4 PHYSICAL NEEDS

How well we take care of ourselves contributes to our ability to stay relational. Hunger, fatigue, physical pain makes for grumpiness.

ROAD BLOCK #5 MISSING RELATIONAL SKILLS

We showed Chris Coursey introducing nineteen relational skills we all need and use to recover when things go wrong.

The invitation here is to train our brains to keep our Joy Switches ON so that no matter what life throws at us, no matter the roadblocks we hit, we can be the ones in the room who manage to stay relational.

HERE IS THE KEY! We've been discussing 4 habits that are KEY to building our joy levels that SWITCH on our relational engine when it sputters.

The acronym for the 4 key habits is: CARS

CONNECT with someone stabilizing (went over this two SALT CO's ago (use our web page SEASONEDADULTS.COM, THEN CLICK ON THE YELLOW BUTTON to see previous teachings on the Joy Switch)

APPRECIATE, aka "gratitude", very powerful. You cannot remain in enemy mode while you are appreciating!

REST! This is where we will dive in today.

SHALOM YOUR BODY, what we will look into next time.

These four are "habits". *The goal of a habit is to make something we value doing to become like a reflex.*

- riding a bike

- driving a car

Joy-based habits engage the relational circuit on what Coursey calls the "superhighway" of the brain.

Ingrained habits use white matter that runs 200x faster than the grey matter, so we don't have to think before we act. We just become that kind of person.

I think when Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount talks about knowing a tree by its fruit He's talking about a kind of person, for example, who acts almost reflexively (we say "second nature") in the moment to extend mercy when he or she encounters a need.

I love the story Fred Rogers told about his mother. When he was a boy there was a tragedy that took place near his house. His mother told him, *"Fred, when something bad happens, look for the helpers..."*

We're learning how we can become this kind of person- how we can develop ingrained responses that keep us relationally engaged, where we adjust as needed to the situation by "attuning" to what is happening=

I can sense the other person is getting close to their limit.

I can sense when I'm getting close to *mine*!

I can use relational skills habitually to stay connected in good times and bad.

Chris Coursey tells us there are two ways to stay relational. First is,

LEARN HOW IT FEELS WHEN WE ARE IN RELATIONAL MODE

Coursey has a nice description:

"For me, colors appear brighter. Sounds [are] clearer. Textures richer. Tastes are better and more enjoyable. I feel peaceful. I can breathe easy and deep from my belly instead of my chest. I enjoy people." (p. 112)

How would you put this experience into words?

We could use C.A.K.E. couldn't we? HOLD UP KEY

As you listen to Psalm 133 notice the graphic imagery he uses to describe what it's like to be in relationship:

*“How very good and pleasant it is
 When kindred live together in unity!
 It is like the precious oil on the head,
Running down upon the beard,
 On the beard of Aaron,
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 It is like the dew of Hermon
 Which falls on the mountains of Zion.
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Ps. 133

[Listen for C.A.K.E. in Paul’s description in one of his letters that he wrote from prison!!

*“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And **be thankful**. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and **with gratitude in your hearts** sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God** the Father through him.”*

Col. 3:15-17]

This relational experience is in contrast with the feeling of being in enemy mode: smothering, stomach tightening, short breathing, problems feeling insurmountable, the need to conquer. To win.

Our goal is to become familiar (intimate experience) with how good it feels to be in relational mode.

So, the first way to stay relational is learn how it feels when we are in relational mode. The Second way is...

NOTICE SIGNS YOU ARE LOSING IT

Coursey describes his experience with “black ice”. Feeling out of control is terrifying.

This is the experience of our relational circuit offline. We are in a diminished state of relationality, and when we are like this there will be casualties. We have little tolerance for what bothers us.

Enemy mode can be dangerous.

Witness the recent demonstration on Westlake Blvd. and TO. Tempers flared and there was an altercation between a man with a bullhorn and a 69 year old Jewish man...details will get sorted out but it got physical...and the Jewish man fell-hit his head and later died.

It's difficult to remain relational in settings like that isn't it.

It's good to know when to step away-find another way.

Jesus shows us a better way.

Two professors at Berkeley who vehemently disagree with each other on the Israel/Palestinian issue wrote this for the student body:

To our students,

We are two professors on this campus who disagree, vehemently. But we have always treated one another with respect and dignity. We love this campus with its diverse communities and all of our students and are heartbroken to hear of incidents of near violence between students in recent days. We will not tolerate our students harming one another. Disagreement and differing points of view are an essential part of campus life, and we expect that you treat one another with the same respect and dignity that we are modeling here.

[Dr. Hatem Bazian (Lecturer of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures and Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies)]

Dr. Ron Hassner (Professor of Israel Studies)]

When we are able to notice we are beginning to lose it then we can take stock.

It's time to use CARS.

Suzanne and I had a MEDICAL appointment at 10:00 in the morning. We waited, and waited, and waited. I could feel my sense of annoyance rising. We'd been sitting there for FOUR HOURS!! But this time I was able to catch myself. I pulled myself off the edge by reminding myself, "WHO we were waiting for...we knew people flew in from around the county to have access to this doctor and I remembered it was within driving distance for us! I calmed. Felt appreciative. And when she stepped into the room after 2:00 I was SO glad to see her!"

The point is we want to learn to recognize when we are falling out of relational mode in order to be able to make adjustments.

Sometimes it's as simple as realizing that we NEED REST!

That's the 3rd key habit to our capacity for glad-to-be-together-joy. Coursey is referring to the research of Dr. Alan Schore at UCLA when he says,

"How well we rest is the greatest predictor of lifelong mental health."
The Joy Switch, p. 115

Coursey adds,

"All too often, we lose our relational circuit and shift into airplane (enemy mode) because we need a breather, and someone fails to see this and stop."
Joy Switch, p.. 115

Then big emotions become too much, and we go into simple enemy mode (we tune out, go to our phones, break eye contact, are easily distracted.) What we need is a "breather". We need to (literally!) *breathe*!

Distractions keep us from resting.

-Technology is everywhere. Count the screens in restaurants. Why so many? Keep customers “happy”, distracted, perhaps offering a way to avoid having to relationally focus?

- The global spending on advertising is around \$674 billion every year seeking every way possible to get us to “pay” our attention, and NOT REST!

Describe “email apnea” how we hold our breath or shallow breathe when we pick up our phones, or check our email (p. 118)!

One way to practice resting, for example, deep breathing activates the parasympathetic branch of our nervous system”- how cool is that??

Want to try this? Count to four breathing in, count to four holding that breath, count to four slowly breathing out, count to four before taking in the next breath.

Reflect briefly on what “air” is from a biblically informed “world view”- air is near heaven! We are literally taking in the gift of life from the Creator! Breathing in life, breathing out worship.

We’re going to have an opportunity to share some of the good places that help us to rest in a minute during our Table Talk.

The point is rest re-charges our relational battery.

So, what are we learning about the practice of the fine art of eldering?

1. *Get good at knowing the feeling of being relational!*
2. *Get good at recognizing when I am going offline!*
3. *Learn to put on my oxygen mask first! (Know when to push pause, to practice CARS, to rest)*
4. *Identify the need for rest in others, especially the people we care about.*
 - a. Pay attention to their actions, behaviors, verbal and nonverbal and help them press PAUSE.

“This joy switch is crucial for parents [and grandparents], teachers, coaches and anyone who interacts with another human being.”

5. *Find a rhythm!*

- a. Two sides of same joy coin. High energy squeal of a baby, but this cannot be sustained, baby also rests in the gaze. Times for high energy joy (celebration), time for low energy calm are both modelled, even commanded in God’s word!
- b. Grandpa Darby, walked home from the Post Office at lunch time. Grandma fixed a huge meal. Then grandpa would go over and stretch out on the “davenport” for an about 30 minute nap before returning on foot to the office.

Note Blue Zone insights.: one of the habits common to people living in blue zones is knowing when to downshift through daily rituals like prayer, napping, walking outdoors etc.

Let’s go to our tables

Table Talk

1. Introduce yourself. Describe one of your favorite places or situations where you rest.
2. What are some of the barriers to REST for you? What or who helps you REST?
3. Describe a time when you saw someone REMAIN RELATIONAL under stress or in a crisis.
4. Describe a time when you were with someone who did *NOT* REMAIN RELATIONAL UNDER STRESS OR IN A CRISIS. How did that affect you?

Resting does not come “easily” to me. Maybe you struggle with this too.

How my go go go (very little sabbath rest pattern of work for many years at first post as head of staff—shingles of nerve next to optic nerve took months to

determine cause and a year of deep reflection to understand how exhausted I was ..."doing good things" in my own strength.

Think of the ways Jesus modelled rest to his disciples. Sleeping in the stern of a boat during a storm! Going off by Himself. Counseling us to "consider the lilies of the field. The birds of the air..." He wants us sabbathing.

I've gotten help from the Shepherd's Psalm. I have a place outdoors where I can watch the light dawning on creation, listen to the creatures, mainly the birds, owls this morning, sometimes the coyotes join in too... I remember that,

***"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside still waters,
He restores my soul..."***

You talked at your tables about where you go to experience this. My question is how often can you get there? Go there often enough and wherever you are you can bring that place with you.

Maybe CARS *begins* with resting, so that then we can connect with the Shepherd who cares for us. We find ourselves feeling grateful, gratitude, appreciating. Shaloming.

And when we are like this we are staying relational.

We are in joy.