

SALT CO.
11/26/23

“Sustaining the Switched On Life”

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You O Lord.”

Psalm 56:3

Welcome to the SALT CO!

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

I also want to welcome those who are joining us online, this is the first time we’ve been able to offer SALT CO LIVE! We are so glad to be able to connect with you!

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...

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+.

You'll notice that the tables we gather around include a 2 lb hand weight to remind us that as followers of Jesus-SPIRITUAL FITNESS-is a life-long process.

AND *spiritual fitness* will show up in our relationships as **EMOTIONAL MATURITY** which increases our capacity to practice of the ***fine art of eldering***.

“GLAD-TO-BE-TOGETHER-JOY” has been the focus of our FALL Series. What better way to experience that kind of joy than SINGING TOGETHER!

We're working through this book...

The Joy Switch

Available at the Bookstore for the price of

1. A Qi Mei spiky massage ball for rolling under sore arches or loosening knots in muscles.
2. A Krazy Namesake Straw you can sip your name through,
3. The World's Smallest Uno Card Game, just three inches long for impromptu games

OR

4. Your own copy of The Joy Switch! Just ten bucks. Cheap at twice the price.

We're now in the sixth chapter, and so far we have learned a lot about how to: KNOW, GROW, SUSTAIN

KNOW... *what Joy is: we are using the specific definition that joy is the relational experience of being “glad-to-be-together” both in high energy delight AND the opportunity to find relief and rest with others.*

GROW...We've learned that with practice-the *joy center* in the brain can continue to *GROW our whole lives* and today the focus of chapter 6 is on the word:

SUSTAIN...how to SUSTAIN Joy—and stay relational-- through the ups and downs of everyday life including the roadblocks we sometimes encounter.

Sustaining because, as we have learned--our joy levels can get depleted! and when that happens our relational engine can sputter, even conk out! We can dip into “enemy mode”.

So, Suzanne made a “quick trip” to pick up a prescription at Von's...and arrived to find about 8 people in what turned out to be a slow moving line...in front of her. She was still glad to be there because the pharmacist managed unexpectedly to get what she needed the same day! While waiting she noticed a security officer slowly walking back and forth along the line that by now stretched several people behind her. With time on her hands she said to him: “This is new...you don't usually see security officers sticking around the pharmacy...did something happen?” He chuckled and said, “People were getting angry when the line got long so the Pharmacist called for security!”

So, Suzanne said, “Well, I don't think you'll have to worry about us!” “The lady in front of her jokingly said, “Speak for yourself!”...and the lady in front of her said, “My, my...I used to be a pre-school teacher and they could wait more patiently than that!” When she got her purchase done she wished those in line behind her a “very happy thanksgiving” which sent a ripple of smiles down the line

This is what Chris Coursey is talking about in this chapter when he says that if our “relational circuitry is “untrained” it can be very unreliable...

We often experience this when we're waiting in long lines...

He says we are more REACTIVE rather than RESPONSIVE to the people we relate to.

Maybe you remember the Soup Nazi... Take a look:

My first time in NYC, off the plane on our way to France I stood in line to order some lemonade. When it was my turn I stepped up, before I could ask, the guy behind the counter said, "What do *you* want?!"

We all know the feeling of "walking on eggshells" around someone scary.

Fear kills joy. We fear getting hurt by someone's actions or words which causes us pain. We can get stuck in enemy mode. Fear can be a signal to get out of danger...but if it's our default setting...our joy levels will suffer and we will struggle to remain relational.

This can happen to us individually, but it can be a dynamic in a family or any kind of group, it even happen in a church—we can get stuck in enemy mode.

Think about what Jesus tells his people about how to be with people who act like our enemies... His is a radically different approach than the world's- He tells us to LOVE them. Which means to seek their good. And to do *that* we have to remain relational ourselves so we can access our PFC to do our best thinking in how to love them.

Chris Coursey writes,

"To remain our relational selves during times of hardship we need a trained relational circuit."

In this sense maturity increases our capacity for “eldering” well.

We’ve used this quote to help drive this home:

*“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.”*

We’re learning 4 HABITS (**HOLD UP KEY**) that spark JOY—because JOY is THE KEY that ACTIVATES and FUELS the RELATIONAL ENGINE (hold up your hand to our right hemisphere w/out saying it...just indicate it) that governs ALL of our relationships.

Today we’re focusing on the importance of peace [SHALOM] for remaining relational.

Coursey offers some indicators to help us gauge when our PEACE is not working so well:

- We catch ourselves focusing on a problem
- We realize we are holding our breath, that our stomach feels tight
- We get lost in scrolling on our phones
- We feel tension in our shoulders
- We have trouble focusing on a task
- We are tempted to go for BEEPS (pseudo joys/substances/instant gratification experiences etc)
- We feel critical and judgmental
- We develop nervous habits

What would you add?

Here's a beautiful description of SHALOM:

"Everything is in right relationship at the right time, right place, at the right strength and in the right amount for God and people."
(2X)

Making for peace is also at the root of the meaning of "righteousness", of "setting things right" so that everything is in right relationship at the right time, right place, at the right strength and in the right amount for God and people.

The righteous person is a peacemaker.

Coursey calls P.E.A.C.E. a kind of "body gauge" that helps us assess our JOY LEVELS

Imagine a dashboard with these indicator lights

Pay attention to my body icon simple body outline

- +My body feels calm, content, and relaxed
- +My body feels strained, tense, and uptight

Evaluate my breathing. Icon: lungs

- +My breathing is deep and relaxed from my belly
- +My breathing is shallow and tense from my chest

Attention and focus: Icon: eyes looking left and right

- +I notice my focus is on positive and peaceful things, which relaxes me
- +I notice my focus is on problems. I replay scenes of upsetting moments, conversations, and interactions. I focus on pain, trying to avoid pain or make pain stop.

Calm or busy thoughts Icon: a brain with rush hour traffic/ a brain with normal traffic pattern

+My thoughts are peaceful as I reflect on the things and people for which I am thankful

+My thoughts are racing. Busy thoughts focus on things or people which make me angry, afraid, hurt, etc.

Easing muscle tension: icon of scrunched up shoulders with head/dropped shoulders

+My muscles feel loose, rested, and content.

+My body feels tense, anxious, and strained.

Noticing our body helps us know how our relational circuit is holding up (p. 132).

This leads us now to the final habit in CARS. (HOLD UP THE KEY)

Quick review:

Connect with someone stabilizing

Appreciation

Resting

And now the S in CARS

Shaloming My Body

The goal is to stay in the “sweet spot’.

-Coursey’s story of the boy who hit the home run with his eyes closed, because he had practiced that swing thousands of times

-Dallas Willard's "off the spot, on the spot" as the basis for the practice of spiritual disciplines. About "effort", not "earning". Jesus practiced spiritual disciplines! Brain science confirmed what we have understood about the importance for the practices of the Christian life in our Bibles. Brain science helps us understand HOW they actually change us ("neurons grow one millimeter a month")

Coursey observes,

"Practice pays off when we rehearse important habits needed for relationships. Imagine the possibilities when you stay relational and hold onto your peace." (p. 134)

Shalom Your Body exercises help to infuse peace into our lives through and with our bodies.

-Note the brain science behind this statement. We have a head brain, heart brain and gut brain.

-We use exercises to calm our body to stimulate the vagal nerve. This is like applying the "brakes" (another wonderful addition to our car metaphor!), aka the "rest and digest" response.

-The vagal nerve (root is "vague" from Latin and French for "wave"), meaning the "wandering nerve" because it spreads throughout the body and stimulates muscles in the heart to slow down our heart rate so we calm down.

-My experiments with this when I was a Recovery Room Tech at St. Joseph Hospital, it works! Used to call this "biofeedback".

-Appreciation and rest can calm the vagal nerve.

Shalom My Body exercises reduce the body's stress response. These may seem and feel strange at first (do did learning to ride a bike, or learning the box step)

Let's meet Dr. Jim Wilder, the Christian psychologist who asked Chris Coursey to write The Joy Switch. He is the author of many books integrating brain science learnings with Christian healing, growth and discipleship. This is a little under 7 minutes:

The goal is to try several rounds of these when we are "off the spot" so we're ready when we are "on the spot" feeling like we are going relationally offline.

Let's go to our tables. Just want to suggest you give the exercises a try for pure fun!

TABLE TALK

1. Please share your name and your favorite holiday.
2. Big holidays can be wonderfully fun. But they can also include some big relational challenges and even disappointments. How has learning about the "Joy Switch" helped you be more aware of "glad-to-be-together-joy" moments so far this holiday season?
3. Can you share any experiences using CARS especially this last week to help you or others?
4. OPTIONAL. Have some fun! Try some of Dr. Wilder's SHALOM the body practices! These might feel strange, but have a good laugh as you give them a go:

- a. The anger or fear response exercise. Do this as a table (four times) as your Table Guide leads. Remember to say,
“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You O Lord.”
- b. The yawning exercise, four times. Remember to say,
“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You O Lord.”
- c. The tapping exercise, four times. Remember to say,
“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You O Lord.”

When we are in the grip of fear we feel we are slipping into chaos. We feel “unglued”. Big emotions can take over, they can even feel like what is most “real” in the moment. Same for low energy shame, disgust, despair. This is “reality”.

After I had my crash in the pulpit and taken several weeks to heal I went back to preaching. Now I experienced panic attacks. Would it happen again? I gripped the sides of the podium with white knuckles no one saw.

A speech coach helped me with my panic attacks. She taught me a very simple move that I’m using right now. Can you see it? By the way I’m NOT having a panic attack!

In this way I’m re-minding myself that I am a person heart, soul, mind AND body! How God made me, and us, vagal nerve and all. To re-connect with reality that David also reconnects with in this psalm when he was in fear for his life.

[He shares his vulnerability with us and what helped him through helps you and me in our times of fear, of panic, of despair.]

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You O Lord.

Then we can actually feel ourselves calming, appreciating as we connect with our loving Lord. Our joy switch comes back online.

Ready to help someone next to us to do the same.

This too is the practice of the fine art of eldering.

Here are some opportunities for you and me to walk the talk: