

SALT CO. FEAST
12/10/23

“Starting a Relational Revival”

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14 NIV

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO FEAST!

When we say “Seasoned Adults” we mean this in two ways:

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...

“GLAD-TO-BE-TOGETHER-JOY” has been the focus of our FALL Series.

Because OUR God is the most Joyful Being in the universe *and...*

God wants us joy full.

What better way to experience that kind of joy than SINGING TOGETHER!

Announce birth of Everly Elise Klotz to Marcus and Christy on Monday!

Here's a nice introduction to our theme today:

VIDEO of seasoned ladies sliding down a snowy hill
00:00-1:00

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFnUm6Owt7M>

Well...what better time than ADVENT to conclude our 7 part series on the topic of RELATIONAL JOY! After all: The Incarnation—His coming to live among us Immanuel...is proof positive of how IMPORTANT it is to the Lord that we experience “glad-to-be-together-joy” —not only with each other--- but with Him.

We can be certain that He will always be “glad to be together with us” **but** —let’s be honest...sometimes we are not ready...able...or willing to be “glad to be together with HIM.” Today we’re going to talk about that.

We’ve been drawing from the book JOY SWITCH by Christian Counselor Chris Coursey.

Coursey did the hard work of explaining how recent findings in neuroscience can be turned into practices that literally train our brains to GROW our “glad to be together joy” levels **SO THAT** we can keep these POWERFUL relational engines ON! [gesture to right side of head]

The circuitry that runs our relational engines takes up a LOT of real estate-- mainly in the right hemispheres of our brains. If God allotted this much neural real estate to our capacities to STAY relational---it MUST BE AN IMPORTANT part of becoming the people HE created us to be!

We've been talking for weeks about HOW TO stay relational with each other...but of course—the good news is—these practices can also help us to “stay relational with God!” If you think about it scripture is full of stories of people’s “glad to be together joy” with God drifting or draining... and their relational engines sputtering and before you know it there are making golden calf idols to worship because they got annoyed when Moses took too long to come down the mountain with messages from the LORD!

The same thing can happen to us. It takes work and awareness to keep our “glad to be together joy” tanks full SO THAT we are able to remain relational with God!

Today we'll call it: Scrooge Mode

SIMPLE ENEMY MODE (aka SCROOGE 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 try to fix other people

How does God look to us, how do we think about God when *we are in “Scrooge mode”*?

How God Looks When We are in Enemy Mode.

- God with clipboard and stopwatch (*measuring our performance*)
- God as judge in black robe behind a big desk holding a poised gavel (*deciding whether we've been naughty or nice...*)
- God as "unmoved Mover"
- God as "Force" (*energy that we use*)
- God as aloof and silent, like a distant father (*I talked about this in YA a few weeks ago*)
- God as tricky (mercurial), plays games with us...
- God as wrathful, miserable sinners in His angry hands...
- God as "anxious" (*rehearse opening line of sermon, "God is kind of anxious, there are spaces between everything..."*)
- God as "gumball machine"!

Seeing God in any of these kinds of ways tells us something about the state of our "glad to be together" relational circuit.

If we struggle to stay relational with God, It may be because we lack the training outlined in previous chapters that teach us to recognize when our Joy levels are low and relational engine is sputtering SO THAT we can shift our attention to one of the key practices. We call this CARS.

CONNECT with someone or something "stabilizing" that helps us calm-taking in the dawn, or a sunset, creation bearing witness to our loving Creator who holds us. It might be seeing the sparkle in someone's eye that says, "I'm glad to be with you!"

APPRECIATION: CHOOSING TO remember something from **our past/notice** something **in the present moment** or anticipate something...just SOMETHING for which we are **grateful**.

REST by learning to recognize when it's time to take a purposeful pause to quiet your mind and your body. *"Rest is the greatest predictor of lifelong mental health"!*

SHALOM MY BODY because we are created as heart, soul, mind and body and we can restore shalom through exercises we practice with our bodies.

This is modelled for us in many psalms. For example, look at Psalm 13:

PSALM 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul

and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";

my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord

because he has dealt bountifully with me.

I will sing the Lord's praise,

for he has been good to me.

Observe:

1. Notice David begins with total transparency: feeling forgotten, alone, helpless, despairing. Is he in enemy mode toward God?
2. And yet AT THE SAME TIME this crying out is *directed to God*. God is not gone, God is “hiding”! David is seeking God in door pounding prayer because he knows He’s there!! (This is our Joy!) Here is gut wrenching connecting with God David knows is there and will “stabilize” him. He is practicing the C of CARS. Connect to someOne STABILIZING
3. David feels this in his body (***“I am shaken...”***)
4. Here is the “turn”: ***“But I trusted in Your steadfast love...”***
What goes into making this turn?
 - a. Remembering his own story of other times of deliverance. Memory of God’s word, promises. His worship practices over his lifetime. Maybe he remembers his community.
 - b. Steadfast love= HESED, which says God’s loyalty proven over time and tender response to us even in our weakness. Hesed love says, “I’m not leaving the room, no matter what happens, even when it seems to you like I am gone, I’m not, I’m here...”
5. Which leads him into APPRECIATION, gratitude, and his brain moving back up into his PFC, and to being able to think about the future in light of God’s promises, God’s faithfulness over his many years.
6. So David can now pray, ***“My heart shall rejoice [FUTURE] in your salvation, I will sing to the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me [PAST].”***
7. Somehow this crisis will also pass. God will be with me all the way through this. In this David can REST and find ways to SHALOM HIS shaken BODY.

The psalms help us too. Chris Coursey describes his experience in the “brown of winter” as he was resting his injured back. Many of

us can relate! Weeks of pain turned into months with his condition worsening.

Read pp. 150-152

Reflecting back on this Coursey realized: *“All I needed to do was keep looking.”*

Because our Lord created us to be in relationship with Him and each other. He came to live among us as Immanuel—God with us. And by His Spirit he is on the loose among us.

So, the spiritual principle goes like this:

The more you notice, the more you notice.

We have repeatedly said during this series that God is the most joyful Being in the universe. And you and I were created in God’s image. God intends for our joy to be full.

As professor Dallas Willard liked to say,

“You are an unceasing spiritual being, created for an intimate and transforming friendship with the creative Community that is the Trinity.”

So, let’s have some conversation.

TABLE TALK

1. Share your name and favorite moment or experience of a Christmas past
2. What do you suspect might be an obstacle that might hinder you in staying relational with God?

3. Have you ever enjoyed a moment when you felt like God's peace was with you? Try to put this into words.

Over these last seven SALT CO's we've seen that Joy is the experience of being with someone, with others who show us they are glad to be together with us! We've seen that this joy begins, is "sourced" in God, the most Joyful Being in the universe, and that we who are made in God's image, are created right down to how our brains work, to live and thrive in relational joy. No wonder this joy is found throughout the Bible.

Have a look: (4:31)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvOhQTuD2e0>

I think of what the angel announced to the shepherds, "***Do not be afraid*** [inviting them out of enemy mode], ***for see*** [look at this!] ***I am bringing you good news of great JOY for all the people...***" (Luke 2:10)

We Elders and Young Adults are His people. Now we go out to help others return to and remain in joy. Because His joy is contagious!

WALK THE TALK

1. Share Christmas at Calvary with a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family
2. Don't forget the Hallelujah Sing Along on Friday 7:30 (SLIDE)
3. STAR OF WONDER- We only need about three more people, to keep their eyes on the worship center and inside the atrium area from about 7:00 until about 8:30.

-For the worship center, we will be stationing an usher at one door, and then an usher about 100 feet away at another door. It will be a short walk-through in case anyone at the event wants to see the inside of our sanctuary. Our main concern is just having eyes on the people coming in, to make Sure there's no monkey business like venturing into restricted areas.