

Let's all repeat our signature verse for the year, Romans 15:13...

<sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *as you trust in him*, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray...

They say that even if you feed & clothe an infant but deprive them of emotional care they'll die. A recent study on survivors of 9-11 revealed that those who had close emotional connection with others had far less signs of trauma and overcame the effects of it far faster than those who refused to allow people into their emotional life.<sup>1</sup>

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Physical touch and emotional connection are important in relationship for a sense of security & peace in the world. Take those away and we flounder - God said in the creation account, it's not right for man to be alone - and that's not just about marriage, we're made for community. Healthy relationships sustain & grow people in ways we don't fully understand. Maybe that's why there are so many one another verses in Scripture.

Which leads me to a question...are you S.A.D.? I don't mean sad, boo-hoo sad, but S.A.D.

Do you suffer from Separation Anxiety Disorder? It usually refers to children. S.A.D. is marked by fear or distress if a person is threatened with separation from an attachment figure; like a child being separated from mom. It's usually treated by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or C.B.T., possibly coupled with E.R.P., or Exposure Response Prevention which seeks to expose the child to anxiety inducing situations in a controlled environment to increase metacognition (a change in thinking) - or an awareness of their own faulty thoughts or feelings. This in order that they would see the truth of their situation more clearly, adjust their thinking, and in turn, anxiety is reduced.

They'd work with the child to recognize anxious feelings & behaviors, discuss the situations, and develop a coping plan. The belief is that a child's dysfunctional thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs are what lead to anxiety.

When adults experience S.A.D. a good counselor would lead them to, not only deal with their own thoughts, but also to develop a healthy network of supportive relationships. Counselors realize a person isn't an island, there's a legitimate emotional need for healthy attachment to others built into us.

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Yet layman may tend to treat an adult differently. With a child everyone seems to intuitively know they need the emotional attachment with Mom. We naturally say, "Mommy's still here, she's just in the next room. She'll be back." But with adults, we don't anticipate, acknowledge, or at the least we diminish the fact, that adults do have & need emotional attachments. We tend to think they should be beyond fear or distress of

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<sup>1</sup> *Hold Me Tight*, by Susan Johnson part 3/chapter 4

separation from others. Needing others, or emotional attachments, especially in American western culture, are sometimes seen as weaknesses, especially in men.

The result is, we sometimes don't know how to ask for what we need emotionally - it sounds wimpy to say to your wife, "Man, sweetie! I just need a hug right now!" Honestly, most men aren't comfortable saying, "Just hold me."

Many people seem to be living with S.A.D. in relation to each other. Alone, separated, unloved, untouched & unsupported.

And maybe more-so in relation to God - Mike said it last week about Peter in reference to him walking on the water out to Jesus. It's not as if he lost faith in Jesus, but Peter, in some sense 'lost faith in who Jesus said he was or could be'. As if Jesus said, "Come, Peter...with me you can walk on water!" But when Peter looked away at the troubles & chaos around him, he didn't believe what Jesus said he could do - or maybe who Jesus said he was. The Truth was that Jesus was there, Peter was safe in relation to him. But although Jesus *was* there, Peter anticipated his *not* being there. He seemed to doubt the attachment he had with Jesus when he saw the waves. Fear & distress arose and he sank in it. The anticipation of separation from Jesus by a stormy sea created anxiety birthing that sinking fear. Peter was S.A.D.

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Correcting our faulty thinking, is helpful. It's good when feeling fearful to stop, take assessment, and remind ourselves that it's not as bad as it seems - my fears are not truth. But it's not always enough. Right thinking. Truth. They're important to grasp. Jesus says, "I am with you always to the very end of the age." A Truth which I can spout at you all day long. You may believe it, but it doesn't make a difference until you 'experience' it to be true - until you're touched by the Spirit of God. We need filling!

I need to experience the joy, peace & power of God filling me and overflowing from me. I must experience all that, yet also trusting God even when I don't feel it - those times when I feel like a child and God has walked into the other room for a moment. I need to be secure in my position with God the Father, and Jesus establishes that security.

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We're not talking about chasing a fleeting experience or feeling, but we are talking about living with healthy expectation that God will be active in our lives - for His Word & Spirit to make a difference. We're talking about contemplating the Word and applying it to our hearts and believing that God is active in this process.

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Adam and Eve must have been frightened. It must have produced some panic to be stricken from the Garden - to be separated from God. But the truth is, *THEY* chose separation. They drove the wedge in the relationship and allowed sin to be born. As a result, humanity was born S.A.D. and God has been pursuing reconciliation ever since. As a result of their choices they experienced separation anxiety in reference to God - and we know that what we experience with God we experience with others. What fills us overflows from us, if I am filled with anxiety, anxiety flows from me to you.

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So, we all come to church and we say we 'believe' or 'have faith', but for some deep down it doesn't make a difference - we're no more full of hope, joy or peace than before. We are more marked by fear, distress & anxiety than we are peace, joy & hope.

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If we look at the World View Model, Jesus should change us at the core - at our World View. However, people usually only start at the belief stage. We start with words; with statements. Jesus wants to get below that, to the heart of hearts, the WV stage - below just words. The stage of recognition (RE-Cognition) and reconnection (RE-Connection) of emotional attachment. The seat of intellect (cognitive truth) and emotion (the sense of safety/trust in relationship); he wants our mind and heart. Maybe that is why we are referenced as children of God in Scripture, not that we are infants, but that we should have the emotional attachment with God as a child would.

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Jesus wants to get at that tender 'don't touch me there' stage. He wants to coat that in his blood & grace so we can say, "I might be really screwed up, but in Jesus, I'm okay!" The place where we're able to allow God to fill us with joy, peace & hope because we're safe and active in the relationship because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

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And in all that we have a part to play. It says it in this verse... 'As you trust in him'. Because when we're secure in relationship we don't just say we believe, but we actually trust...we operate out of safety & security because of Jesus. We live and breath and rest in Grace and we naturally turn to God for filling like baby birds in a nest.

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Remember Jesus said the first of the two greatest commandments was, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'<sup>2</sup> But know this... you can't really love what you don't really trust. How do you love God with all heart, soul & mind? Obedience. Because obedience is born of trust. If I trust, I obey, and to obey is to love. Obedience reflects trust. Trust reflects love.

It's not legalistic for me to say we need to obey God because we aren't being obedient to gain acceptance. We're obedient because we are accepted & secure. We can trust him. And as I trust, he fills me with joy, peace & hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's a relational dance based on the sacrifice of Jesus. In Jesus all that is wrong is righted. The wrath of God against my sin was poured out on his Son. Jesus bore that burden so that I don't have to - and by his resurrection that power of sin and death over me is broken so that I can operate in the safe & secure relationship with the Father by grace through faith in Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 22:37). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

A child must choose to be obedient & wait patiently because they trust that even though they don't see Mom, Mom's still there. There's always a sense of healthy fear of authority when it comes to a parent. But a good parent never abuses their authority to hurt a child, they use it to grow a child up. And, as it is with God, the child can trust that parent since security is constantly reinforced through loving authority. A child learns to grow into adulthood in the confines of secure relationship of healthy loving parents. In turn a child easily obeys since they trust, and obedience is an expression of love - they know that the direction from the parent is always for the best.

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But again, usually we only say we believe, we're cultural Christians, yet we live out of anxiety, clamoring to fill the void because the World View has been left unchanged. It's what Walter White does in Breaking Bad - his worth as a man is tied up in his ability to provide - what the world tells him a man is to be. His desire to find worth drives him to break bad and do things he never thought possible. He didn't wake up one day and say, "Wow, I wanna be a murderous drug lord!" No, he wanted to be a good dad & husband but...he's driven by fear, anxiety and pride. His identity isn't rooted in a God he can trust will provide for his family - in his mind, it's all up to himself. And like most of us, what is presented on the outside is not what is going on behind the scenes.

But in Christ it's wholly different, in Jesus there's security and security should lead to transformation, and transformation to holiness. And when that happens we have disciples - people of integrity who are exactly what they seem to be. People of joy, peace & hope.

Remember a few months ago we spoke of 2 Corinthians 3 where it says <sup>14</sup> But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

Remember, ancient Greeks made a separation between mind and heart (which we've carried on today). The mind - the rational self. The heart - the seat of emotion. They liked the rational, but emotion, not so much. Jews didn't have a distinction between the two. Mind is the thinking part of the heart, and heart is the feeling part of the mind - an ancient idea reinforced now by modern neuroscience. We're holistic creatures. So the veil is over the mind/heart of these non-believing Jews Paul refers to here when they read the Scriptures. And the same would be true of us without a salvation knowledge of Jesus today. Because Paul continues...

<sup>16</sup> But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

So as we turn to the Lord, now we are free to see & experience things we could not see or experience before. The Spirit of God brings a new freedom to see a new reality in Christ and that comes to us through this filling by the power of the Holy Spirit. And not only are we transformed, but we have freedom to live in holiness. Paul finishes his argument...

<sup>18</sup> And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate (*which means to behold or reflect on an image in our mind*) the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. <sup>3</sup>

It's what God has said to us from the beginning - Adam. Eve. You don't need the fruit of that forbidden tree over there, I'm enough to satisfy all your needs and desires. The parameters of safe relationship with God had already been set, they just needed to live in obedience and be filled! As we trust in him we can be filled with hope, joy & peace; transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.

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Even as adults we need to know we're safe, accepted and secure in relationship. We need a place where we're known and being known. In Christ we have that; reconciliation with God the Father. We're filled with the Spirit of God and given the grace of his Word. So instead of separation anxiety, in Jesus we have healthy emotional attachment. And what we experience with God we can experience with others. Now what fills us overflows from us and those are the things of the Spirit; joy, peace & hope.

We need community; a place where we know people have our backs, they're for us. That should be church, it should be a safe place, but so often it isn't. Some cringe at the mention of 'church' because of the judgement & abuse they've experienced there. We don't want to be that, and no church ever set it's goal to be hurtful of its members. That's the reason, as we think about Community Groups starting this fall that one of our Community Group values is to be a safe place of growth. Here is how it reads...

### **Community Groups are places of growth**

*Grace is experienced and extended to each member. We are invited to grow at our own pace and comfort level. Groups should be a safe place where trust is evident. Our acceptance of each other is not based on performance. And, we intentionally follow Jesus together seeking an appropriate level of challenge and risk taking in relationship. Although our groups provide an intimate atmosphere for people on a spiritual journey, our expectations must be in proper perspective. The community group does not meet all our needs. Some will be met in one on one relationship, some miraculously by the power of the Holy Spirit, and some in the larger community of faith.*

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In conclusion, cognitive therapy is good, to personally recognize our faulty thinking and to adjust it to reality. But if we just focus on changing our thinking we discount the need for true communal emotional connection; the importance of relational connection between people and the overall mental/spiritual health which that brings. It's the way God designed us to be; in connection with him, and in connection with each other. The mind & heart are the same - truth & experience - what we experience to be true, truly changes us. We cannot be totally cerebral, nor totally emotional about faith - God

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<sup>3</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (2 Co 3:14–18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

seeks to change us at the core level, our world view. And he says, I'm here in Christ. I'm not going anywhere - your safe, and I want to fill you up to overflowing!

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Research shows that children who grow up with healthy secure attachment do better in life. Early experiences with Mom & Dad shape a child's core beliefs about self, others, and life. Emotional experiences of nurture and protection are encoded in the emotional center of the brain. Over time, repeated experiences become the image of self, others, and the world. These core beliefs become the lens through which children (and later adults) view themselves and others, especially authority and attachment figures. Core beliefs serve to interpret the present and anticipate the future.

Children who have experienced secure attachments in the early years are apt to say this about the Self, "I am good, wanted, worthwhile, competent, and lovable." They see *Caregivers* as, "Appropriately responsive to my needs, sensitive, dependable, caring, trustworthy." And they view *Life* by saying, "My world feels safe; life is worth living."

What if we could rest in the security we have in Jesus and say, "I am good, wanted, worthwhile, competent, and lovable. Jesus is responsive to my needs, sensitive, dependable, caring, trustworthy and my world feels safe; life is worth living."

Our secure emotional attachment to God would be the lens we saw ourselves, others and the world through. That world view would enable us to trust and the God of hope would fill us like we were a five tiered fountain to overflowing with hope by the power of his Spirit. Joy, peace & hope overflowing into us, our family & friends, our neighbors in Ardmore/Havertown, and finally the world.