

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye over you . . . Psalm 32:8

WILL THE REAL CHRISTIANS PLEASE STAND UP!

I remember back when I had time for such things, I watched some 'cops and robbers' type TV shows. Inevitably, there would be this line: "Come out with your hands up. You're surrounded!"

The reality is today, as Christians, we're surrounded! And not by the police, either. We are surrounded by the world, and its influences. The Apostle John wrote in his first epistle (letter) these words:

For everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world.



And, we live in the world. So we are surrounded by all these influences. And we can so easily become 'acculturated' or accustomed to what the world does, what the world values, what the world believes - and become a part of that.

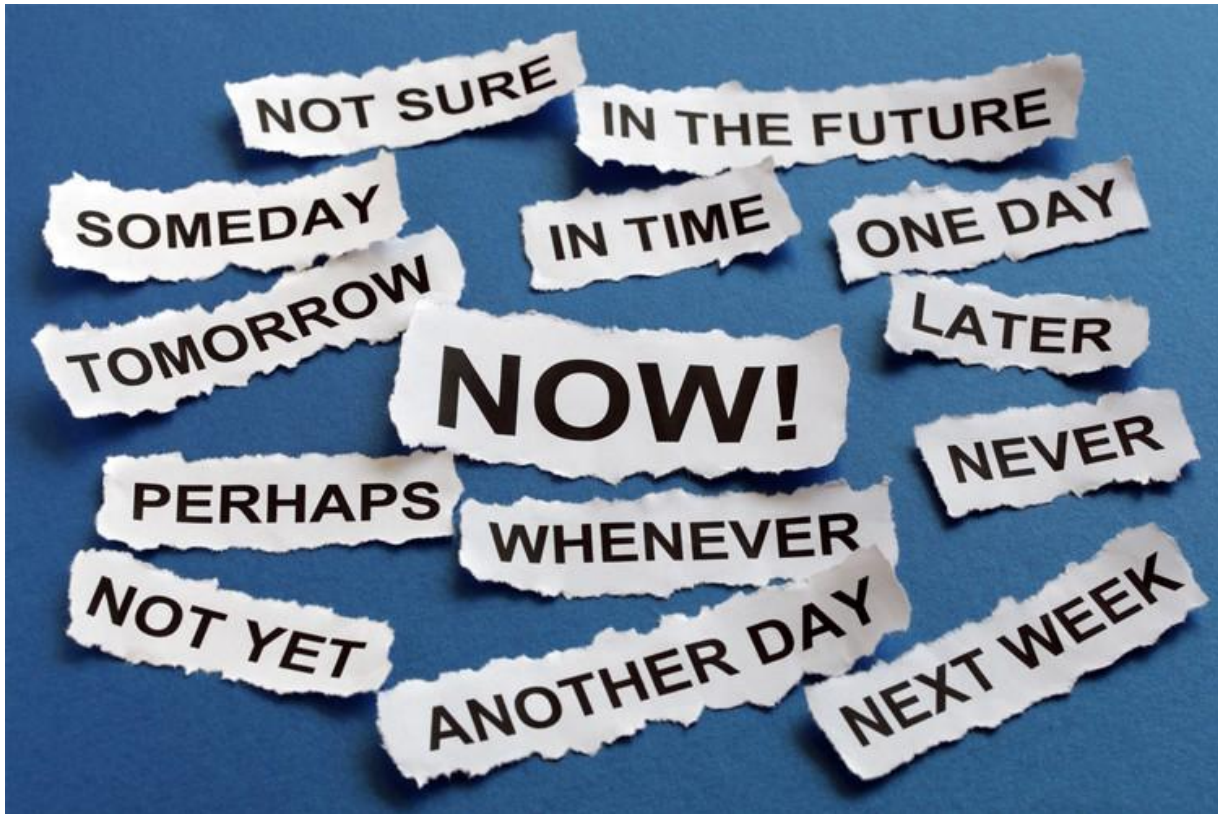
And yet, as followers of Christ (Christians), although we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. We are to be very **DIFFERENT**. Recognizably different. Attractively different - from those who are living 'in the world' and living without Christ!

Let me give you an example of what I think is an attractive difference of **REAL** believers. They are very compassionate. And sensitive. They have the eyes, ears, and heart of Christ Jesus. They notice things. They respond when others around them are hurting. For them Christian care-giving - is just, well, a way of life!

Historically, back in the bad old days before modern medicine, whenever there were plagues, whether bubonic plagues, or black plagues, people would flee. They would run away; run for their lives. But the Christians - they stayed. When everyone else was running away, Christians were running toward those in need. To care for them. To minister to them. To keep them company. At the peril of their own lives. You see, for the real Christian, there is something we understand: our lives in this world are short. Eternity is long. And like Christ, we are willing to lay down our lives for our brothers. We are capable and willing to 'die of self' in order to bless others. We are like Jesus, in this.

Which leads me to today. Wow, we have had a lot of people sick and dying lately. And we live in a world which is afraid of death. People in our world today, many if not most, are reluctant to spend time with the seriously ill and dying. Even with members of their own families, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles . . .

And when it comes to spending time with those who are suffering, are sick, and dying, we who are well have many excuses.



See how you think these excuses jive with the heart of Christianity:

- ✠ I don't visit because I don't want to get sick myself.
- ✠ I don't visit because death scares me and I don't want to think about it.
- ✠ I don't visit because I don't like hospitals and nursing homes.
- ✠ I don't visit because someone else can do that in my place.
- ✠ I don't visit because I don't want to remember my loved one 'that way.'

As I recall, whenever Jesus became aware of someone who was suffering, he didn't speed away; he rushed in! Even in the case of those who had already died, he showed compassion, he rushed in, and brought new life. He was, and is, a life-giver. And so are we to be!

Perhaps we do not have the power to raise Lazarus. Or, like Jesus, to raise the son of a widow. Or the daughter of Jairus. And yet, we do have the power to bring life, and hope, and comfort to those who are suffering.

After all, if we could think beyond ourselves, we would quickly realize that those whom we love, and who love us, need us most of all when they are suffering. We can usher in the presence of Christ! We can hold a hand, we can help with feeding (instead of some stranger), we can read to them, share memories with them, pray with them, just be with them.

Compassionate caring for the sick and dying is one of the things which distinguishes the heart of a true believer, from the heart of a lukewarm believer who has fallen into the world's ways - and values.

So, will the **REAL CHRISTIANS** please stand up! I look for a revival in our age of true, compassionate, warm hearted Christianity, where all the world will know that we are Jesus disciples, by the love and care that we lavish upon one another.

Who is suffering and struggling that you can reach out to, with the love of Christ? Will you do it?

A LEGACY OF MAKING DISCIPLES OF . . . OUR CHILDREN!

I have been thinking about our children a lot lately - all our Salem children. Perhaps this is because, along with Debbie, we are now in phase 2 of child-raising ourselves. My, they grow like corn, don't they? (So fast!)

As I reflect back now on 12 years of ministry here at Salem, one of the things that has been a very positive legacy here is that we have always poured much effort and love into providing a fine Christian education for our Salem kids. We have had many classes, and many teachers, and many have served for years and years without a break, because this work of the Lord is so very vital to the future of our children - and our community!

I would like you to pray about **your role** in continuing and even **strengthening** this legacy! As we face the future, we very much envision Salem continuing to be a church that attracts and ministers to young families - and that means we need to have a vibrant and exciting program to help families reinforce what kids are learning at home, by emphasizing those teachings here - in Sunday School on Sunday mornings, and in youth clubs on Wednesday nights.

Just like our resistance and excuse making when it comes to ministering to the sick and dying, many of us have our excuses for why we cannot or will not help out in the nursery, or as a teacher or helper in our child discipleship ministries. Here's a few:

- † *I've been there and done that, and it's somebody else's turn.*
- † *I'm not sure that is my gift.*
- † *I'm too busy to take on one more thing!*
- † *I come to church to get a break from my kids.*

Well, what does God's Word say about teaching children? Quite a lot, actually!

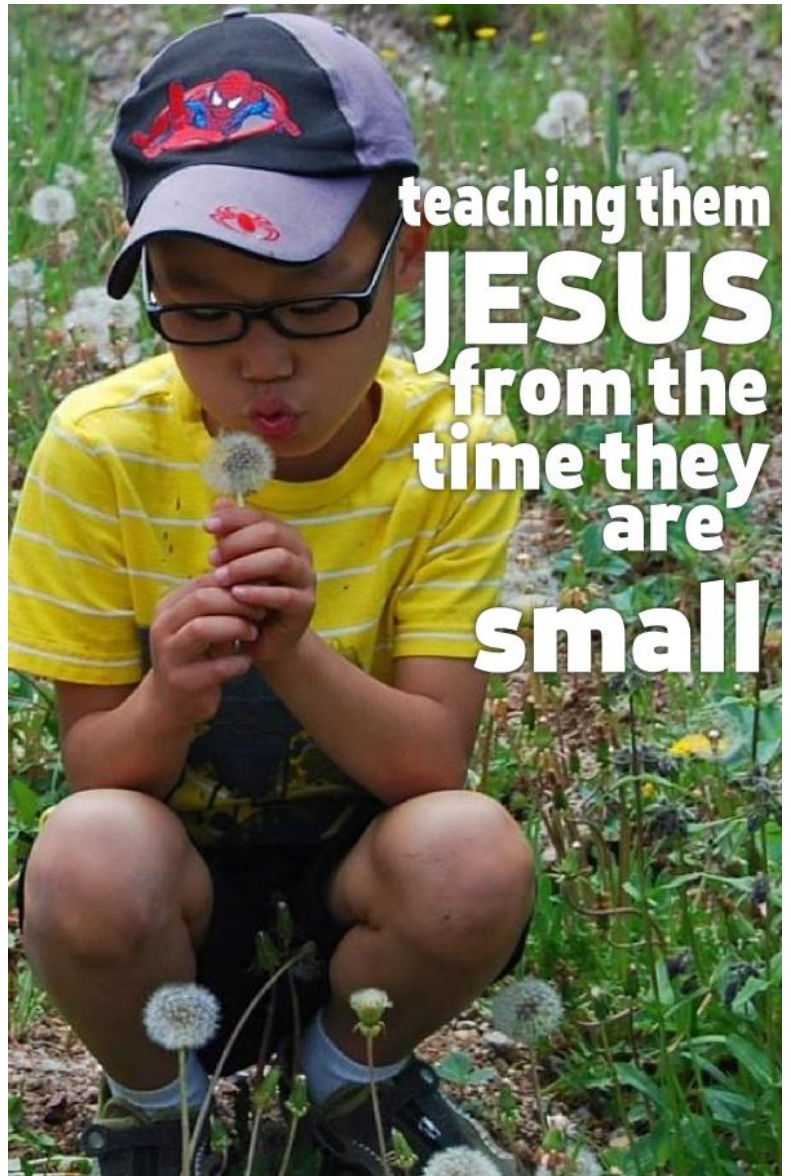
Proverbs 22:6: ***Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.***

Deuteronomy 6:7: ***You shall teach them (laws) diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.***

2nd Timothy 3:14-15: ***Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

I am so glad that we are been training up children in the way they should go since 1851 here at Salem! Remarkable! And that we have supported our

parents by talking about the Lord to their kids here at church, strengthening and reinforcing what they learn at home. And I am glad that children who come here have become 'acquainted with the sacred writings' (God's Word) and that this godly knowledge helps them to have fruitful, positive, productive lives as adults.



Now, back to our excuses; let's address those briefly.

- ✠ **I've been there and done that. Let someone else have a turn.** What if there is no one else? What if your retirement did not come as God's calling for you, but your own human decision?
- ✠ **I'm not sure that is my gift (teaching kids).** Well, here is one way to find out: try it! Often, we are unsure what our gifts are until we try!
- ✠ **I'm too busy to take on one more thing!** Yes, we are all very busy. Life is busy today. Sometimes, it's important to examine our priorities - how we spend our time - and see which activities are God-pleasing and truly fruitful.
- ✠ **I come to church to get a break from my kids.** In spite of needing a break from our kids from time to time, over the years we have had many active parents who have happily assisted in the nursery or Sunday School as a 'rite of passage.' With that sense of responsibility to share the load diminishing, we are at risk of not being able to have as much programming for children. So, if current parents are unable to step up, we must expand the circle of our volunteers to include those who are not yet parents, and those who have already 'been there and done that' so we can fulfill our biblical mission and Christ-mandate of 'making disciples.'

So, please do be in prayer about how you can help make disciples of Salem's great kiddos! We have recently been blessed with wonderful new leadership over our children's ministry area (which includes Nursery, VBS, Sunday School, Christian Camping, and Elementary and Junior Youth Groups.) Amy and Tom Elliot have volunteered to provide overall leadership to Children's Ministry here, and to help us to continue our legacy of fine programming and Christian teaching for young people. They would be eager for your support, and help! Amy, by the way, is the daughter of Kathy and Jeff Rohrer.

Let's continue our mission: Making Disciples of All Nations at Salem, even the nation of our own children!





CONGRATULATIONS SALEM ONE WAY YOUTH TEAM!

Last evening (Wednesday) about 7:30 PM our youth and adult advisors returned back from their 'Mystery Mission Trip' to Allentown PA. They had an interesting and exciting and fruitful week from early reports

Saturday was launch day; the large crew of nine young ladies, seven young men, and seven adults loaded up our two church vans, the church trailer, and Jeff Rohrer's truck early in the morning, setting out for inner city Allentown. One young man sort of overslept, and his mom brought him to Allentown later on! (oops!)

Upon arriving the team set up a Family Festival at the small Evangel UB church (19 members) for Saturday afternoon, and engaged with the community; men, women, boys, girls - a fun time was had by all!

Sunday was the day for worship at the church, I am understanding the guest preacher was our own Slugg! Then, attention turned to getting ready for Vacation Bible School, which ran Sunday night, Monday, and Tuesday.

Wednesday was reward day, as the group, now 24 strong, went to Dorney Park to have some fun together, although the presence of some clouds, thunder, and rain dampened spirits some and caused a slightly earlier return home.

I am so proud of our youth group - and youth leaders - who are willing to surrender to Jesus, and invest much time, and energy, blood, sweat, and tears to make disciples of all nations, even the nation of Allentown PA!

This year's leaders: Slugg and Mindy Kissinger, Jeff and Kathy Rohrer, John and Jennifer Ross, and Amy Lehman. Girls were: Meriah, Danessa, Katie, Maddie, Mac, Karina, Alexis, and Shelby. Boys were: Bryce, Levi, Kyle, Aaron, Pierre, Brandon, Steve, and Vladimir.

Congratulations to all on some very fruitful days of ministry - the gospel preached, a number of professions of faith received (11 VBS kids plus one of our youth), all lives touched for Jesus!

They modeled very well our Bishop's word for the church: **ALL FOR CHRIST!**

SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for

✝ Ministry Needs:

- Potential Salem relocation to North Pointe
- Developing Stephen Ministry: Sandy Ibaugh
- Pastor Lascase, ministry in Haiti

✝ Hospital, or recovery

- Margaretta Young, several hospital stays
- Doris Guyer, heart failure, weakness
- Lisa Sattazahn, Knee Surgery
- Jerry Paisley's grandchild, Tori

✝ Grieving Families:

- Wilmot, loss of Jeana's mom, Sharon
- ✝ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment
 - Julianna Shubert, ongoing disorder
 - Bob Paxton - compression fracture spine
 - Brandon Kissinger, Chiari Malformation
 - Ray Bricker, Parkinsons

LAST WORD: CARE

In life, we have many choices. God has made us that way; in His own image, with free will, and free choice. So, when it comes to caring, we have to make a choice; a decision. Every now and again, we have to take stock, I know I do. If we were to evaluate the words we say, the deeds we do, the time we spend, what would we conclude about who we most care for:

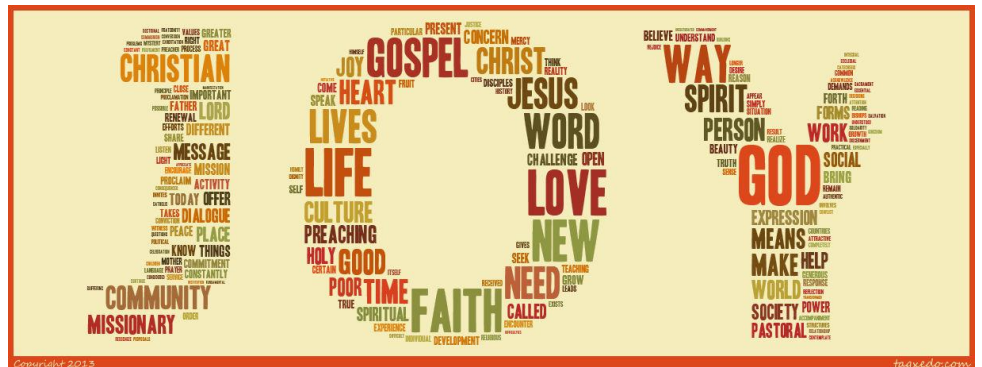
- ✝ SELF? (That's what the majority of western people seem to care for these days; look out for # 1!)
- ✝ OTHERS? (Being other-centered would be a great virtue; fairly challenging in practical reality!)
- ✝ JESUS? (If Jesus is truly the one we most care for, then we listen to His voice, and obey His commands!)

Well, for our lives to be in balance, how we care in all these directions must be in balance. If we don't care for ourselves somewhat, we can become 'burned out.' If we don't care for others, we can become exceedingly selfish. If we don't care for Jesus, our lives are no different than those who don't profess faith in Christ at all.

Someone once recommended this prescription for keeping lives (and priorities) in balance: **JOY!**

- 1) **J**esus
- 2) **O**thers
- 3) **Y**ourself

So what would need to change to get our priorities in that order? Have a blessed walk with Jesus this week!



In Christ; Pastor Art