

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

OUCH!

Ouch! That hurt!

Sometimes, perhaps too often, we are wounded by the ones we love, the ones we thought loved us! As a pastor now for many years, I have heard so many stories of personal woundedness . . . and I confess to having felt wounded myself on any number of occasions . . . here's the shocking part . . . by Christians!

Perhaps that's what makes it so painful when it does happen, because we sort of know - this isn't supposed to happen. Christians aren't supposed to hurt other Christians. We are supposed to be family - brothers and sisters.

We have a new puppy now. His name is Oliver, or 'Ollie' for short. He's cute. He's a mix of Labrador retriever and miniature poodle, which is supposed to result in a dog which a) doesn't shed, b) doesn't bark much, c) has the fun loving personality of a lab (our last dog was a lab) and is about half the size of a lab. We love our new little puppy, Ollie. However, he BITES! He bites us - a lot. Well, I guess that is to be expected. He's only a puppy. He's exploring his whole world with his mouth. We are trying to teach him not to bite.

But we don't expect our brothers and sisters to in Christ bite us. When it happens, it can lead to tremendous pain, and deep disappointment in the quality of our fellowship. Often, when we are hurt in the church, and hurt by church people, it makes us want to run. To leave. Perhaps to find a better, more loving church to make our spiritual home.

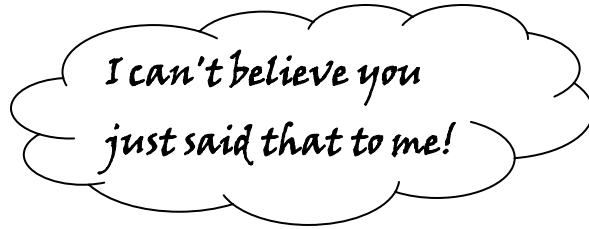
Or, it may cause us to give up on church altogether. And that is sad. Because the church is the body of Christ. And of every social institution that is available to us today, the church is the one place where we are most likely to be loved, to be encouraged, to be schooled in how to please and follow Christ, and where we learn how to get home - to our eternal home.

So, how do we get people not to bite? Well, that can be a long, painful struggle. A puppy can outgrow its biting tendencies in a few short months. For some humans, it may take a whole lifetime. Jesus seems to advocate the direct approach - to help biters to learn not to. He essentially says, (paraphrasing here), ***Go back to the one who bit you, and say "you bit me! That hurt!"***

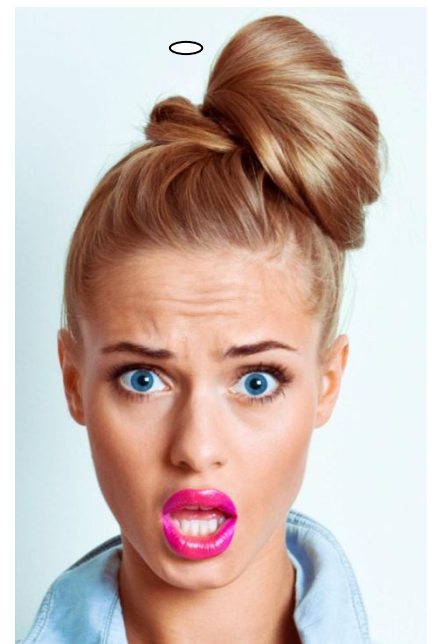


And if that approach doesn't work, Jesus suggests getting more folks involved. Take one more with you, a witness. If that doesn't work, get the church involved. It's all laid out in the Gospel of Matthew, 18:15-17.

This is a complex issue today. So many people become offended - so easily. Often people take offense when no offense was actually intended. I myself have managed to offend any number of people over nearly 20 years of ministry. Never intentionally! But my offenses usually fit into these categories:



- ✓ Gaffs. Things said on the spur of the moment, without much forethought.
- ✓ Oversights. Things I forgot to do. Promises made, then forgotten in the heat of the battle.
- ✓ Humor. Especially humor that didn't strike someone's funny bone as very . . . humorous.
- ✓ Theology. People can be all over the map with what they think is the 'correct theology.'
- ✓ Insensitivity. Not noticing that people are hurting, or in need of help. (Although most never tell me!)



And, I suppose, there are many other ways I can and have offended people.

But what really grieves my heart, and you can see this in our nation today, people don't seem to get over being offended. They get offended, and they just want to roll with it. To stay angry. To maintain or increase distance. To engage in fight or flight.

This is not the biblical path. This is not the 'Jesus way.'

Jesus came to us - to earth - on a mission of reconciliation. Reconciliation! Big word! It means: **the ending of conflict or renewing of a friendly relationship between disputing people or groups.** Jesus came to bring to an end the family feud between God and His children. To remove the dividing wall of hostility. To deal with the problem of SIN, and that which has long separated us from God.

Yes, Jesus was an agent of reconciliation. And he also taught us about grace, and about forgiveness, very important and vital concepts in the life of Christian people.

And yet, when we, as Christians, get offended, it seems we forget. We forget reconciliation. We forget that this is part of our mission - the healing of relationships.

We forget forgiveness. We want to wallow in our pain, and never move on to healing, to forgiveness.

We want to forget grace (giving undeserved favor to people who have hurt us). We want to trade grace in on something darker, like retribution, or 'an eye for an eye.'

And this is the way the WORLD goes. You hurt me, I'm gonna hurt you! But as followers of Christ, we are to be different. Radically different. In fact, we are to show the world, by our love - our forgiving, healing, graceful love, that we are Christians - that we belong to Christ. And that belonging to Christ makes a difference in our lives.

If we fail in this, if we act like everybody else (an eye for an eye, an insult for an insult), we have just unraveled and voided our Christian witness. We have shown those watching (there are always those watching) that Christianity doesn't work. That belonging to Jesus makes no difference. That we are angry, reactive people just like everybody else.

As you know, part of my calling at Salem is for the REAL people of Jesus to emerge. REAL loving. REAL forgiving. REAL graceful. My vision is that when people come to Salem, they could REALLY see Christianity in action; the way it is supposed to work.

So, as we think about these things, two very basic thoughts from your pastor:

1) Don't bite.

2) If you get bit, work towards healing. Handle offenses the way Jesus taught.

May the Lord bless you as you do these things!

Pastor Art

MESSAGE PREVIEW, THIS SUNDAY: DEEP CLEANSING

This first Sunday of October (welcome to Autumn, by the way!), we are continuing to explore deep faith, as we open God's Word to examine the idea of deep cleansing.

I think as Americans, we generally like the idea of being clean, of cleanliness. I know many of you have very clean, well organized homes. I have been impressed! Some have perfectly orderly and weed free gardens.



As for myself, I like to have a clean car - that should be no surprise to anyone. In fact, for years, before our family embarks on any big trip, I will go to some pains to wash the car, clean the interior, and create a pleasant environment in which to travel. And my DW (dear wife) for years wondered to me why I bother to do that: "It's only going to get dirty anyway!" And my answer is "I don't know. I just like to travel in a clean car!"

Well, God wants us to be clean. And to stay clean. Probably a better biblical term might be holiness, or righteousness. God's Word is pretty clear, we are to walk away from the old, dirty, dark life, into a new life that is clean, and bright, and unstained by ongoing, intentional sin.

So, we are encouraged to 'come clean' and go deeper with the Lord.

I have often wondered why more people don't go deeper with the Lord. And I have come to see the answer. It's sin. Sin creates a wall. Sin creates an impulse within us that makes us want to hide from the Lord - and not get too near to Him. Sin creates in us the same reaction as was experienced by Adam and Eve when they sinned. What happened? They went against God, and sinned, and discovered, to their shock, that they were naked. And they hid from God. They were ashamed to be in His holy presence. They were dirty now.

Well, the dirtiness of sin is a problem that plagues all of us. We will learn, should we choose to honor God with our presence on Sunday, that sin takes two forms. One we have little control over - the sin nature. It's just part of who we are. The second - sinful actions - we have a lot of control over.

So if we have sin problem, we shouldn't feel too awkward about that; we all have a sin problem. God's Word says so!

But we shouldn't ignore our sin problem either. God has provided the solution, in His son Jesus. We can be made clean. And we can be made comfortable to get close to God. We don't have to spend our lives hiding from Him. Deep cleansing is possible!

I will have some stories from the annals of Hollywood film making to share, and we will be having communion on Sunday. So come, learn about cleansing. The Lord has shown me some good news, I'd like to share it with you!

THANKS A MILLION!

I would like to express some particular thanks in today's edition:

✠ Children's Ministry: Thanks to Amy and Tom Elliot, and to those who have been joining the revitalized Children's Ministry team. A number of exciting things have been happening, consolidation of the children's ministry area to improve child safety and security, the erection of a bait and tackle shop in the lower level of the church (fishing for men theme), new curriculum, and new volunteer staff.



✠ Property Manager: I would like to thank Dave Brenize for being our property manager for the last several years. He has been a very dedicated and responsive volunteer to take care of our three buildings (all of which are high maintenance) and our grounds. Most recently he painted the steel arches supporting the roof of our Pavilion - and did a beautiful job. Dave has given us so much of his time and talent over his season of service - thank you!

✠ Missions Presentation: Steve Forrester and his Alaska Team and Dave and Pam Osbaugh and their Kentucky team did a great job sharing their summer missions work with pictures and stories last Sunday evening, followed by refreshments. I am blessed that we are a church that goes beyond the four walls to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world! (Still hoping to soon see a Salem relief trip go out to help those afflicted by hurricanes of this past season!)

✠ NorthPointe Property: Bill Nye has been working with our board, and officials from Orrstown Bank for months to try to nail down a way to transition the business park property on the corner of Salem Road and Philadelphia Avenue from the bank, to our church. He has spent hours and hours in financial computing and business meetings to try to bring this to an actual workable proposal. We are expecting to hear back from the bank about our latest proposal real soon. If this plan comes together, we will have a new opportunity for new life in a much more visible, accessible, easier to operate facility.



EXCITING NEWS: FARM HANDS TO RETURN, OCTOBER 21!

I am pleased to share that the Nashville Gospel group the Farmhands will return to Salem for a repeat performance on Saturday, October 21st, at 7 PM. I believe the Mongul String Band will provide warm up before the Farm Hands come on. I was out of town the last time, but have listened to their recording over and over again - very enjoyable. Note this on your calendars, and invite family and friends - they will be blessed!

NEW OPPORTUNITY: NEWCOMER'S CLASS

Several times per year we offer a newcomer's class to explore what it means to follow Christ at Salem. There are four sessions, and those who would like are able to become a 'partner in ministry' at Salem following the completion of the class. It starts this Sunday, October 1st at 9:30 Am, and runs for four consecutive Sundays, concluding October 22. Contact Pastor Jason Bakker for more details! Would love to have you come along on this journey of discovery!

GRADUATION OF BETTY NEWMAN

Dear, sweet Betty Newman has passed away at the age of 92. I had just gone into the hospital Monday afternoon this week to visit with Gladys Bennett, and with Betty, and when I arrived at Betty's room, a nurse was listening to her with a stethoscope, and announcing that she had passed away. Betty loved coming to Salem, she was one of the many who came over from the Salem United Methodist Church when it closed, years back. And she was really delighted to be here . . . and was a delight. A very special lady. She had many interests and was a fascinating lady, who will be missed. She is survived by one son, Steven, and a number of grand and great-grandchildren. She had not been well enough to get out much over the last few years, and we only saw her during her hospitalizations. Her services are as follows: Visitation at Geisel Funeral Home Thursday 6- 8 PM, Friday Noon - 1 PM. Funeral service officiated by Pastor Jason Bakker at 1 PM Friday at Geisel.

SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for

✝ Ministry Needs:

- Potential Salem relocation to North Pointe
- Leading new Grief Share group: Sally Wadel
- Renewal of Children's Ministry area
- Teachers and Helpers for Children's Ministry

✝ Our Nation

- Response to many seasonal hurricanes
- Renewal of national purpose
- Recovery of patriotic spirit and unity
- Collaboration of political parties

✝ Hospital, or recovery

- Jeff Rohrer, broken leg, skin graft
- Doris Guyer, at home on hospice care
- Chloe Fisher, serious auto accident
- Kathy Rohrer, cataract surgery recovery

- Gladys Bennett, Heart Ablation 9/28
- Jen Ross, recovering from bad fall
- Margaretta Young, October hernia surgery
- Mike Hotchkiss, Back surgery TBD

✝ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment

- Earl Ross, severe arthritis, legs
- Dorothy Rice, Kidney cancer treatment
- Essie Knouse, hospice care
- Julianna Shubert, hospitalized, serious
- Bob Paxton - compression fracture spine
- Ray Bricker, Parkinsons

✝ Grieving

- Family of Betty Sellers
- Kim Myers, loss of father, Dick Hoffman

LAST WORDS: CLEANSING

These words from 1st John are at the core of Sunday's message for this weekend (October 1st). Think and pray over these verses . . . prepare for the Holy Spirit to speak:

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

To live the abundant life today, and to qualify for the eternal life to come one day soon, we need to be cleansed. Remember Peter, who at the last supper said ***"you shall never wash MY feet!"***, and Jesus said ***"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."***

Friends, we all need cleansing. If we submit ourselves to deep cleansing, we will have a deeper, more joyful, closer relationship with Christ than we ever imagined possible.

Be cleansed!

