

July 7th – “D” Fence – Dog Days of Summer – Getting’ Defensive About The Triple “D’s”

Introduction – Dayton Children’s Hospital just opened a “Behavioral Health Crisis Center” to deal with the growing mental health crisis impacting the children and teens in our area. “The pediatrics hospital said last year it evaluated nearly 1,000 children in severe crisis and hospital officials said there is a need for improved mental health services for children.” In the words of the “Dance Time Boys; ‘what’s going on here?’” The growing crisis among adults is now impacting adolescents and children as serious behavioral issues are exposed by the stress of life.

But those struggling emotionally, those whose troubles bear down on them like a ton of bricks is nothing new. It is such an explosive problem that health insurance providers, Medicare and Medicaid, scramble to provide coverage to those in need. Even the church is scrambling to overcome its more sanctimonious approach to the issue as all forms of care, physical, emotional, and spiritual, are being coopted by secular efforts. But mental health care has always been the primary business of the church. Wasn’t it Jesus who said; *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Mat 11:28-30). Our ministry is to help the weary and burdened whose hearts are not at rest and lead them into a learning relationship with Jesus who will lighten their load with His perspective of truth. We must remind them that God is ready to help the broken and crushed. *The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.* (Psalm 34:17-20)

Above all others God hears the cries of the broken and crushed, but for some reason we abdicate God’s care to others without filling the gap with God’s grace and love. Paul commands us to *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”* in Galatians 6:2. He told the Roman believers; *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.* (Rom 15:1-4)

Scripture is God’s primary way of giving us endurance and encouragement. Truth is, every form of therapy flows from the basic principles of eternal truth, it is simply parsed in different ways to support the techniques and tools that are offered to help those in need.

During these dog days of summer, from early July to mid August generally, it is easy to get into a spiritual slump as we are more isolated from the eternal truths God has given to us to endure and be encouraged. Unless we are supplementing that, we become vulnerable to the lies of Satan who goes into overtime discouraging us, disheartening us, and depressing us. So, we want to take these next few weeks to take a “Defensive Stance” against the attacks of Satan meant to burden and crush our spirits. We will talk about the “defence” God has provided for us to help us. There is the “Defensive Line” which is our salvation in Christ which we work out through “godly sorrow”. We have “Defensive Linebackers in our

families who encourage us to hang tough, not give up because our troubles are temporary, we remind each other to live by faith, not sight. Then we will talk about the “Defensive Backs” who help us when Satan’s runs get too far into our thinking. These friends who are sometimes professionals we invite to help us deal with our anxiety by correcting our thinking so we can enjoy the peace that passes understanding. We have expertly trained and talented secondaries who are ready to help us when needed.

We will take one Sunday to talk about Satan’s trick play of discouragement. We will learn that hope in God is our coping mechanism. We will talk about the devil’s cheating plays meant to dishearten. We will learn that justice is God’s specialty which gives us the courage we require to overcome. We will also spend one Sunday talking about Satan’s effort to put too many opponents on the field to depress our spirits. We will learn that accountability restores us when we are willing to confess our anxiety.

But today I want to encourage you to realize how much Jesus endured for you to prove He is worthy to be yoked with you. Remember; **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."** (Mat 11:28-30). Jesus is ready to give you rest by easing your burden. He doesn’t take it away, but He joins with you body, mind, and spirit, to ease your burden. He does that by showing you a different way to grind through life. He is gentle and humble, and His promise is that no matter what your burden, He will lighten your load by teaching you his gentle (calm strength) and humble (confident submission) ways. He will send waves of people into your life to help you, and the harder or greater your burden in your heart, the more help you must get.

It is possible that you are struggling with discouragement, disheartenment, and depression and you have dealt with it so long, you have just accepted it as a part of your life. We can become discouraged when we don’t think we are making progress in our faith or in our living standard, we get disheartened when we suffer loss or tragedy, and we struggle with depression when we become so distracted with the negative things around us, we can’t see the good things we should be thinking about. These things take their toll on our bodies, minds, and spirits so we must address body, mind and spirit to overcome. Jesus is ready to do that with us if we will but “come” and “take.” Will you commit to “come” to Him today by admitting you are weary and burdened, there will be no judgment here. Will you commit to “take” on His double yoke as you rid yourself of your single yoke? As you learn His gentle (calm strength) and humble (confident submission) ways, you will find rest with His help.

Will you who are strong make a commitment today to help those who are weak. My sweet wife has dedicated her life to helping people with serious issues, and as people like her can help us, we can help them by setting up those lines of defence we talked about. Talk to people who you know about Jesus and His salvation for them, as family members of those who struggle, encourage those who struggle to

live by faith, trusting that God has a plan for them. And in those serious cases, encourage those you know to seek help from a doctor or professional counselor.

Because the infrastructure of salvation and faith have been neglected by many you know, they will struggle with things that will burden them and overwhelm them. These folks might self-medicate, self-help, all while they are in self-destruct mode. Our opportunity for ministry in this area is unlike any in history. We must “carpe diem”, we must seize the day.

Here is what I need you to do. Pray, propose, and plead. Start praying for those you know who need healing, those so stressed by life they are falling apart. Propose to them that Jesus is ready to make their load lighter, invite them to come this month to hear how, engage in conversations with them that lead to the hope of salvation and the healing of faith. But if they are really are beyond what you can do, plead with them to get help, to go see a doctor or counselor. We have some good ones in our area. If you think they need my help, plead with them to talk with me, or tell me to talk with them.

For such a time as this...are you ready to get defensive about the triple d's? I enjoy watching Guy Fieri in Diners, Drive-ins and Dives as he goes about the country showcasing the culinary successes found all over the country. I wish life could be more like that. But sometimes life requires a Chef Robert Irvine from the Food Network Show “Restaurant Impossible.” He goes into situations where there is dysfunction and depression. He gets down and dirty with his clients to help them restore their restaurants to their former glory. There are times we get to celebrate the great work of God all around our country, but there are also times we must get down and dirty with those struggling to restore their lives. I hope you will join me this month exploring how we can be like Chef Robert when needed. You may find you are the one that needs the help, you may find there are those close to you who need this help, and you may determine you need to plead with those who need to get expert help. It is for such a time as this we take up this cause. Join me today in making it your cause too.