

Days OF Hope

February 2020

Charles in Charge by Jon Wells

"Pastor Jon, tell Charlie to stop. He's driving me crazy! Charlie won't stop. . . tell him to stop please!"

"What is Charlie doing?"

"He keeps saying that I am his b**ch! I am not his b**ch! You need to tell him that is not OK . . . tell him to stop messing with me and tell him it's not OK!"

"Charlie that's not appropriate, please stop."

"Pastor Jon, Pastor Jon! He still saying it- but he's just not saying it out loud anymore. I can see his lips moving . . . he still saying I'm his b**ch! Pastor Jon make him stop!"

Anyone who has tried to manage a herd of small children understands this dynamic. One child instigates another, and the victim of these instigations loses their mind. At some point in this interaction, every parent has uttered this phrase, 'Just ignore him and he will stop.'

Can you imagine how much more common these type of little conflicts are in residential programs? The kids we see in treatment exhibit behaviors that are the worst of the worst. Sometimes it seems like every child in the room is that instigator, and that makes for some exciting moments!

While it seems universal for caretakers to ask children to ignore such rude accusations, it is also common for the kids to be totally perplexed by that instruction.

"I can't ignore him, he keeps saying it . . . How am I supposed to ignore him?"

A child's receptive response to baseless accusation reveals a deeply insecure youngster who does not know who he is. More accurately, no one with authority has told him who he is. So when a peer comes along and curses at him, making accusations about his identity, he is rocked to the core.

In the sixteenth chapter of his Gospel, Matthew records a little snippet of conversation that occurred during a private moment between Jesus and his closest followers.

Continued on next page

“Who do men say that I am?” Jesus asked these trusted men. The responses were varied. By that point, rumors had rippled throughout the countryside of a rabbi unlike any other. Gossip spread about powerful teaching unlike anything the old graybeards in the temple were spouting. Accounts of healing and miraculous signs were spreading like wildfire, and the sentiments must have been as varied as today’s daily political opinions. The answers the disciples offered to Jesus reflected the popular belief that Jesus was a resurrected prophet of old.

“But what about you?” Jesus asked, “who do you say that I am?”

Peter broke the silence with a bold assertion. “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

We need to notice that Jesus was not fishing here for his identity. He did not listen to the popular opinion polls and conclude that he must be some mysterious ancient prophet. More to the point, Jesus did not lean on Peter’s assertion of his divinity as some kind of proof or support. Jesus did not require Peter’s opinion or the support of the public to be secure in His sense of self. Jesus’ identity was rooted in the opinions of a much higher authority.

To understand the deep and abiding sense of identity that Jesus held, we need to look at another passage Matthew recorded in the third chapter of his account. At the moment Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, Matthew describes the Spirit of God ‘descending like a dove and alighting on Him.’ In that moment, Matthew also records the voice of the Heavenly Father audibly speaking,

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”
My son. Mine. My beloved. I am fully pleased with him. I delight in him. Read that again. Let that sink in.

To so many of us, the idea of a father who unconditionally delights in me is a foreign concept. It may be hard for you to connect with the power of this moment, but this was much more than a formal launch to Jesus’ public ministry. In that moment it was not enough for the Father to claim Jesus, or to declare His love for Jesus. The father added a phrase, (in the

Greek) *en ho eudokesa*; ‘In whom I am fully pleased.’ The amplified uses the word delight. No wonder Jesus carried a durable and healthy sense of self! He had it on good authority that He was a cherished son, beloved, delighted in.

Throughout His ministry Jesus had a regular habit of isolating Himself to talk to the Father, and I can only imagine how this identity was further cemented in those hours of prayer. Jesus knew who He was, and that strong foundation carried Him from His temptation in the wilderness through His

ministry and all the way to the cross. All the while Jesus successfully ignored the various accusations from the legion of voices that rose to speak over Him. Some suggested He was Satan. Others wanted to make Him king. His own family thought he had gone crazy. But Jesus never forgot the one voice that spoke identity over Him. “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”

What about you? What is your answer to the question? Who do men say that you are? How important is that answer to you? The poor kid in treatment has an answer to that

question. ‘Charlie says that I am his b**ch!’ Can you see how a little boy with an insecure sense of self would be rocked to the core by such an accusation? Can you see how much you are just like that little boy, swayed by the opinions of others?

You and I are all too impressed with those who speak over us. We swell with joy at the praise and wither under the accusation. But what would it be like to take that question to the Heavenly Father? (I don’t have the space here to unpack this idea!) So many of us are too bound up in performance based theologies and achievement oriented spirituality to be able to even hear the loving voice of a Heavenly Father call out our name.

You are My son, My daughter. You are My beloved. In you I am so pleased. I delight in you.

Is it possible? Could that be the Good News? Would the Heavenly Father do such a thing- speak blessing over me and claim me for His own?

If He did, would I take His word over Charlie’s?

²⁰ Then He came to a house in Capernaum, and a crowd formed again, so many people that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat a meal together. ²¹ When His own family heard this they went to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He is out of His mind.” ²² The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul (Satan)” —Mark 3

DAYS OF HOPE



Program Director
Jon Wells
jon@daysofhope.net



Chaplain
Sean Wilson
sean@daysofhope.net



Treasurer
Jo Ann Davidson
joann@daysofhope.net

Visit us Online!



www.daysofhope.net

We are currently scheduling speaking engagements. If you are interested in inviting one of our chaplains to come and share with your church, class, or community group, let us know!

PO BOX 12
St. James, MO 65559
573.578.3259



Growing on the Inside

-Sean A Wilson

As I navigated the halls of the facility last week, many conversations were taking place. I heard yelling from a group of young men as they attempted to talk over one another. I stepped on to the male unit and I asked, “Does anyone wanted to speak with the chaplain?”

Three of the boys said, “Yes, I do!”

At the same moment, a young man who yelled out loudly across the room, saying, “F—k God”.

“That’s your choice.” I responded as I walked away.

I’ve learned over time that some kids will say and do severe things to try to get a response out of people. Their behavior is often disrespectful. However, it’s a silent response that exemplifies the greatest strength.

As I minister to these young men and women, I’m reminded of how much I have grown with patience and the love of God; this is what I mean by growing on the inside. Being on the inside of the facility has initiated another level of growth on the inside of me! Growth extends mercy, presents grace, and shares love. That same kind of maturity causes me to pray more, talk less, and listen intensively. I know that I often have one shot at reaching and helping the hopeless. I can’t allow myself to be phased by the kinds of things that are often shouted out at me. These are just expressions of pain made by distressed kids.

James 1:27 says this, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” Visiting those who have been and are afflicted is what we do. In the process of ministering to them, I am blessed. This work is causing me to grow on the inside.

For over 15 years, **Days of Hope** has been bringing the good news of the gospel to thousands of at risk youth. We continue to insist that God's solution to all of the innumerable challenges these youth face is found in the person of Jesus Christ. We are a not for profit, inter-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to address the spiritual needs of children and teens who are living in residential psychiatric care facilities throughout central Missouri. We are supported by the prayer and gifts of individuals and churches in our community. Through the ministries that are offered at Days of Hope, Bibles are distributed, pastoral counsel, services, and groups are provided, and these children are given an opportunity to respond to the gospel message.