

February/March 2021

Days of Hope

Passionately communicating the love of God to hurting kids in a gentle way

Stirring Beneath by Jon Wells

Residential treatment facilities are exceedingly strange places. When a kid shows up to admissions, they create a file and make a list of his favorite sins. All the mistakes that he has made, all of the stuff he's been struggling with; everything ends up in his file. Then they create a treatment plan, complete with a list of actionable goals. There is a whole team of people, from child care workers to therapists to case managers to administrators whose job it is to keep track of this kid and make sure that he doesn't end up doing the same stupid stuff that he was doing before. I don't think you or I could hold up to that level of scrutiny!

Treatment plans are filled with Action Steps. These are observable behaviors that will help the child accomplish his goals.

"Billy will remain safe by following the directives of his staff at all times."

"Billy will refrain from grooming his peers and engaging in sexual behavior with others around him."

"Billy will remain safe by remaining in bounds at all times."

"Billy will communicate in positive ways and refrain from using inappropriate language at all times."

"Billy will interact with his peers in positive manners and refrain from physical aggression towards staff or peers."

The treatment goals and action steps are as specific as Billy's favorite sins. Pick your poison, they have a fancy treatment goal for that! All these treatment goals are built around concrete expectations of change. They define some external indicator; a hoop that the kid must jump through.

As helpful as this process can be, the real change that is

necessary is not external change. There is some internal maturity, some deep reckoning that must occur in order for these goals to be met. But we write our goals and grade the outcomes based on what we can observe- on the surface.

You and I are no different. While we obsess over what is happening on the surface, it's always the deeper things that really matter. I have been learning lately that the Kingdom of God is always stirring beneath the surface details of our daily lives. All the really significant things are happening out of sight. Our oldest son is getting ready to graduate from college. He is finishing his last few classes so he can 'walk the stage.' When he graduates, that piece of paper they give him will be nowhere near as significant as the challenges he had to overcome to get there. Intangible things like maturity, deep character development, and overcoming personal challenges are so much more valuable than that scrap of paper they give you at the finish line.

This spring our family is in the process of a local home relocation. All of the external reasons for moving are apparent; three of our four kiddos will be out of the house by this fall. Downsizing is an obvious next step for us. Add to that the financial implications, family considerations, and moving seems to be the right choice. But for all of the sensible, visible reasons for this move, deeper things are percolating beneath the surface. Kingdom things.

The external happenings of our lives are not unimportant. God is engaged in our specific circumstances. On the surface we can connect with wisdom, direction, and biblical principles like compassion, good stewardship, proactive planning.

Continued on pg.3

DAYS OF HOPE



Program Director
Jon Wells
jon@daysofhope.net



Chaplain
Sean Wilson
Sean@daysofhope.net



Chaplain
Logan Stark
Logan@daysofhope.net



Treasurer
Jo Ann Davidson
joann@daysofhope.net

Visit us Online!

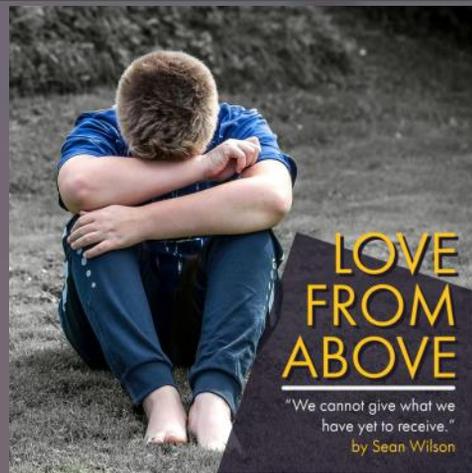


www.daysofhope.net

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

"I love you" is a phrase that we hear often. Some of the youth in our facilities may have been told this and experienced abuse simultaneously. In contrast, others have never heard it at all. Can you imagine having a family member or someone you trust harm you and unknowingly distort your perspective of trust and love forever? What about being beaten and someone tells you they do it because they love you? Either way, for that child, love will take on a different meaning than God intended.



What is love? In scripture, we see love described in 1 Corinthians 13 as being patient, kind and rejoicing with the truth. It always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. This definition of love sounds more like what a person's actions should portray. As we encounter one another, we must remember that love is not just a word; in fact, it's more than a deed; love is a way of life. As love is described, it is patient, which means it waits on others. To love is to esteem another greater than oneself or bear the weaknesses of our brothers. That is an example of the love that we must seek to exemplify in our encounters with others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot expect others to grow as fast as we do or develop at a rate we dictate. We must be willing to stand with them for as long as they need us. I know this may seem to be difficult, but we are not alone.

To love at the level described is not something that man can fulfill alone; we need to be born again. A tree is not fruitful unless it receives the nutrients delivered by the "Root." The fruit is not produced because we will ourselves to do it; it is made when we yield ourselves to receive from God. We cannot give what we have neglected to receive. To share love, we must receive it from above. Romans 5:5 says, "and hope does not disappoint, **because the Love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit** who was given to us." "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, **God remains in us**, and His love is perfected in us, 1 John 4:12."

As the above verses mentioned, we see that love is from God, and it is given by way of the Holy Spirit. As we meditate on God's goodness and how he has extended his love towards us as His children, we can share that same love with others. So, no matter who we encounter, we must be prepared to share Christ Jesus' love as we have received it. Let's seek to be patient with those around us. Let's bear the infirmities of the weak and be patient while we seek peace with all men if possible. Being the light in this world is to be love in this world. Everyone must know that the love of God is different from the love of this world.

Simple Truths

by Logan Stark

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"

Guns. Guns are a very controversial topic. And rightfully so. They are a weapon that can be used to take a life. Yet, they can also be used to defend and to provide food. Like any tool, they are neither good nor evil; however, they can be dangerous. Yet the topic of guns did allow me the opportunity to speak biblical truth.

Last month, despite weather and COVID, I was able to visit with some of the boys at Great Circle. I started my visit by joining a game of catch with two of them who were tossing a football around. We started out just throwing and catching it normally, before upping the game by trying to catch it with one hand. The two teens were a lot better at this challenge than I was.

Our game was interrupted when supper was brought out. The two teens joined their fellow cottage mates at the table as plates were prepared, and one of them even gave me a plate with a slice of the birthday cake that had been gifted to him that day. I smiled and said, "Thank you," as I sat at a table with another pair of boys.

Continued on back page

Stirring Beneath Continued . . .

What is happening on the surface is not at all a bad thing, but there is more going on than meets the eye.

Friend, I am not sure what season you are in right now. Perhaps you were up all night changing diapers and trying to convince a newborn to sleep more than two or three hours at a time. Perhaps you are facing an empty nest, unsure what the next chapter holds without any diapers to change! Perhaps you are picking a college major and trying to figure out which direction to chart your course. Maybe you are navigating a crisis this week. Perhaps you are considering job offers, or a move to a different city. Whatever surface issues you are facing, I truly believe that God is interested in these things. He can and does bring direction and comfort to the specific circumstance you are facing. But I would challenge you to peer deeper below the details, because the Kingdom is often stirring in deep places. You and I are generally obsessed with surface issues- my prayer life is almost entirely consumed with how these little events play out. It seems that we would be content if God would just engage in this specific stuff that is easily seen. I pray for good grades or victory in a game or financial success or career growth. While I am praying and planning and worrying about this current superficial decision, God is moving in ways through that circumstance that are so much more important than the apparent outcomes.

When you look at the daily goings-on in your life right now, there's a lot of rushing to and fro, a lot of things that just have to get done. But if it's true that the kingdom of God is percolating underneath all of that busyness, what exactly is God doing down there? I have seen that there are some basic Kingdom truths that keep reappearing in the middle of all of my business.

Jesus is fiercely pursuing your heart. There are no two ways about this. He's coming after you. The single minded love that carried Him to a cross has not abated; he has not given up on you, he has not finished pursuing you. Your current spiritual status, no matter how impressive or despairing you feel, is moot. Your denominational affiliation, your current relationship status, your financial circumstance; none of these things matter. The Savior never stopped moving towards rescue, and He will push through all of these things to bring you home.

Relationships are primary. In the midst of all the chaos of daily life, God uses these whirlwinds to deepen the roots of our love for and connection to Him and to one another. In the kingdom, relationship is the currency that matters most.

Necessary Maturity. It's time to grow up. I've mentioned this word already, but maturity is a huge deal. We are invited to grow into wisdom and understanding. Becoming 'Christ-like' is one way that New Testament authors specifically address this issue. Like every living thing that God made, from the trees to baby birds to platypuses, I am invited to grow into that specific thing God intended for me to be. God won't allow you to camp out in old ways of doing things and immature versions of yourself. You are an image bearer of the Most High God, He designed you to express His image in a totally unique way. His calling on your life is to rise up into that image fully. Like rings on a tree, all of us are invited to mature into something that looks more and more like our Heavenly Father. This is a character issue - how are the inner workings and structures of my very soul are knit together? If I took a look under the hood at who you are as a person, what would I find? Frustration? Impatience? A short temper? Jealousy? Take a look at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 to get a cursory review of the directions that God desires to shape our souls as we navigate the daily to do list of life.

Can I challenge you this week to take the time to dig beneath the surface? As you ponder and pray about the outward issues, take a moment to ask Jesus where he is moving beneath these things. God is always leveraging the visible to advance His Kingdom in less visible places. You and I would be wise to join Him in these endeavors.

Your Kingdom Come - Your will be done - On Earth as it is in Heaven.

My conversation with the pair started safe, talking about the food, school, the weather, before the boys made it more personal, them sharing a little about themselves. One of them told me how he had spent time in Alaska, hunting elk and bear. He was excited as he told me about his trip, and about all the different guns that he owns, bragging that he's a skilled hunter. After describing his collection and his trip, he mentioned how he wished people took better care of the planet.

I responded that people are supposed to care for the planet. As stewards, we're instructed to take care of creation, of the planet, and the animals. Perhaps this is not the most profound truth in the Bible, yet a truth nevertheless, and a command that God did give to mankind in Genesis. Our conversation then morphed into how much better of a world this place would be if people not only took better care of the planet, but of each other as well.

Jesus is a much wiser man than I, but if you look at many of His profound truths and revelations, they revolved around common things, observations of the world that he lived in. Jesus used everyday concepts like baking, farming, and fishing to reveal spiritual truths. He also took the time to get to know people on a personal level, and utilized examples from their personal lives, like the woman at the well, to reveal His purpose. As a Christian, I try to mimic this approach, seeking opportunities to introduce Kingdom ideas to these kids and teens as I visit with them, instead of trying to cram Bible trivia down their throats. Thus, a conversation about guns became a brief conversation about the job that God has given to all of mankind.

This simple approach can be used anywhere, not just at a behavioral center but at school, work, even a shopping mart.

Although I'm actively seeking these opportunities as a chaplain, I'm not on a quest to spiritualize everything: "Oh you like tacos? Did you know Jesus ate food?" Neither do I seek to set up traps or pounce on others with these truths. Instead, I pursue authentic conversations and real connections with these kids, finding opportunities to love on them and to share with them the truth of the Kingdom.
