

How to Jump Start the Faith Engines of Your Community

It is the responsibility, and within the latent capability, of every believer to be competent to help and encourage friends and family—to be able to perform first aid for the soul, to be the first line of defense against darkness.

Paul says it best: “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14).

That is the idea: brethren (that is, people in relationship), full of and motivated by goodness and love, holding the right tools, empowered and led by God, able to gently admonish, encourage and help set free.

The Bible refers to that process, that gift, that thing God is doing to bring about internal healing and freedom by a single Greek word: *sōzō*. It means “to save, heal and deliver.” It is all one package, one and the same Greek word. So that is what we call it, too.

Jesus came to “*sozo*” us.

Over the last 10 years, thousands have found increased peace and freedom and experienced the freshness of encounters with a loving, living God. Many are learning how to walk out the scriptural injunctions to complete each other, to care for, encourage and even reprove each other. Some encounters are very dramatic, some gentle and peaceful. All occur in an informal, confidential, honoring, one-on-one or small-group setting, friend with friend.

This is not counseling—that is properly the purview of trained professionals, not first responders. This is about a couple of

friends going together to God to get help in time of need.

In a nutshell, Sozo is a God-led framework helping to free individuals from the effects of wounding and sin, and delivering people from the snares and presence of the demonic. It is done in overt partnership with God through finding past and present believed lies and points of access and removing or changing them; establishing healing, blessing and obedience in their place; and restoring individuals to relationship with Papa God and a more fruitful and fulfilling walk.

In Sozo, we depend on God on a moment-by-moment basis. We like to say, "If God does not show up, we cannot fake Sozo ministry!" That is unusual, I think.

Sozo is a changing and growing "lay" approach to working with God in setting each other free. There is no single training manual, proponent church or ministry or certification process. It is more like Alcoholics Anonymous and less like "Sozo, Inc." It makes the best use of tools and approaches developed by others and modified for our use and to fit our DNA. No minister is a "professional"—though many have had years of training and experience in Christian ministry. Some are psychiatrists, some are certified counselors who use the tools on a daily basis, and most, like me, are just compassionate knuckleheads.

So you can fit in just fine.

So ... is it wacko? Is it spiritual mumbo jumbo?

Let's look at our friend Bob's car.

The right way to start a car, as intended by its "creator," is with a starter. Failing in that, we can always try to jump-start it. Failing in that, and if it is a stick shift, we can always push-start it. And if that does not work, we can take it to a mechanic, figuring something is broken.

Let's look at Bob.

Bob is feeling down. You and he are having coffee and he expresses dispirited feelings, sad moods and poor behaviors. You are wondering what to do and how to think about your friend Bob. He is like that car that will not start.

If we try to get Bob help we may find some professional who will recommend changes to his environment, behavior, relational skills, cognitive reasoning structures or brain chemistry. Lots of ways to start the car—none wrong if they work.

That's great, but what can we do about it?

I am a spirit being, I have a soul, and I live in a body. The Bible is pretty clear about this. Our Creator intends for us to live from the inside out. What we believe in our hearts drives all else.

The beliefs in our hearts are like a car starter—they are intended to propel our lives. God intends our hearts to be powered from within—from communion with Him within our spirits.

Beliefs then influence the thoughts and operation of our brains. Our brains are meant to be structured over time through the flow of sound truth and gentle love. We are to automatically and effortlessly think along peaceful and healthy mental pathways—as brain scientists say, "Neurons that fire together wire together." The proper wiring and functioning of the brain then guides and directs behavior. And through proper maintenance and protection, we do not break down emotionally or behaviorally. We are not broken.

Our approach, and the subject of this book, is to work mostly from the inside out on beliefs and also on spiritually broken aspects of lives (the result of negative spiritual events). We think that when Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the

truth will make you free," He meant it in a very practical and applied way. We may advise people with unexplained issues to get a thorough physical to make sure there is not a true physical brain malfunction, and we may give advice on right thinking and on responsible behavior.

We take this approach first because experience in thousands of settings shows it can be very effective, and at worst it is still encouraging and loving when applied within our framework. Second, it is well framed within the truth found in Scripture. And third, we take this approach because we can. It is simple to learn, powerful in application, low pressure, informal and well within the definition of "first aid." It is within the reach of most people.

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