

## **Welcome Back Kotter**

Psalm 51:8-12, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:15-19

The First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights

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(This version is condensed from the audio, for a full audio copy please call the office 412-921-6153.)

Many of us remember the mid to late 70's show *Welcome Back Kotter*. It features a former student Gabe Kotter who ends up teaching a group of high school students at his old alma mater. The sitcom features characters like Vinnie Barbarino, Juan Epstein, and Arnold Horshack. These teens are not your average teens they represent a diverse group. They range from cool like Vinnie to not so cool and not so smart like Vinnie to really not so smart.

This morning I would like to share with you some human and spiritual truths, nothing that we do not already know. When we discover our relationship with Christ has drifted, strained or even reached the point of brokenness, Jesus gives us the opportunity for renewal because He gave us hope and promise.

*-Let us pray-*

I started here at CHUP as the Outreach Coordinator and Youth Director in 1990. As a licensed Social Worker I felt God's calling to clinical work and began work at a children's and adolescent's psychiatric hospital in 1994. Later I began my own computer business where God has greatly blessed us. Outreach coordinator, social worker, computer tech, sounds like a great start to a book but that's for another time.

When in your life have you felt safe? Secure? Focused? Even at peace? Why? Was it because of your family? Friends? A happy moment in your life? As a kid it was with my Dad and Grandmother who made me feel safe and secure. I remember Sunday nights as my favorite time of the week. Everyone was home for the evening and we all gathered round to watch *The Wonderful World of Walt Disney*. I felt at home, safe and everything made sense. Some of you have met my Dad and Grandmother. Dad was a strong and confident man who knew everyone. Grandmother was my "mother". Having lost my mom early in life, she stepped in and held everything together. Both were my security blanket.

When in your life have you felt confused? Unsecured? Even afraid? As if you've lost your focus. Why? Was it when you graduated high school or collage and where not sure what was next? Maybe you got mixed up with the wrong crowd and made some poor choices? Or even a fight with your spouse? For me it's when I've lost sight of my Savior Jesus. Oh I've had those feelings of confusion after graduation and have made poor choices before but the hardest times in my life have been when I've taken my eyes away from Jesus.

In the sitcom *Welcome Back Kotter*, you have a group of teens who one minute everything is fine, everyone is joke around and pulling pranks on each other, all in fun of course. Then next there is trouble and things are getting out of control. In the end however Mr. Kotter seems to help the students find sense and clarity even forgiveness.

*Read Scriptures:* Psalm 51:8-12, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:15-19. These scriptures are truths that help us realize as Christians we are prone to mistakes and errors. Galatians and Corinthians specifically state “we no longer live”, why, because as human beings we - will - mess - up and need help. Psalms reminds us that we can gain clarity, peace and a right heart. The Bible is full of scriptures that remind us of who we are, where we’ve come from and where we should be.

On November 16, 1993 I received a call that my father’s bypass surgery went well but while in recovery he developed complications. A clot found its way to his carotid artery. Linda and I began the long drive to Toledo Ohio late that night. When we arrived, we were met by the Doctors and the news was not good. He was pronounced clinically dead because of no brain function and that life support would be removed once I gave the ok. It was a dark time even with Linda beside me. I knew I needed Gods clarity, peace and strength but I could not do it on my own. We sought out the Chaplin and began to pray. Instantly I felt God take hold of me like a Father holding his child comforting and say it going to be ok. It did not make the situation void of pain but it did make it easier do bear. I hugged and thanked the Chaplin and began to say my goodbyes.

Do you feel lost? Do you feel hopelessness? Is your life not quite where it should be? Then I have one question, where is Jesus in your life? When you became a Christian God promised never to leave you but it didn’t mean you couldn’t turn away from. Is He the co-pilot or the pilot in your life? Is He hard to see or is He clear in your life. Just as a candle flickers in the dark distance it becomes brighter as we walk towards it. Chances are if you’re struggling, loosing faith or hope, you need to welcome Him back.

My friends it’s ok to turn your head or loose focus, it happens why else would God give us His Son on the cross. He is the teacher, comforter and redeemer that will put things in to focus. He will never “leave nor forsake you”.

Through out scripture mankind has fallen and God has raised them back up. Look at Adam and Eve. .... Look at the book of Judges..... It happens but remember your not alone we are called as one family to support each other. Just as the Chaplin did when I had to say goodbye to my Dad.

Look around you; see the faces in the pews near you? Look at the top of each stain glass window, what do they say? Do not take these people and words for granted especially when things get tough. These are all testaments that God has given us a way, a hope, a **Sunday night family time, a way to welcome Him back.**

**Where are you this morning?.....Do you feel safe?... Secure?..... Focused?...** If so keep praying for those in need..... If not,... let us help you **Welcome Him back.**