

Gospel Community Guide

In the Circus, we become disoriented. Confused because our perspective of the world, of God and our daily expectations of life are *disproportionately exaggerated or shrunken*. There are aspects of our culture that mirror the images of God's kingdom and people (garden life); yet the mirror is not an exact reflection.

Like a house of mirrors, the circus picture in which we live our daily lives often creates a *disproportionate view of ourselves, our situations, and our expectations*. While this may be entertaining in a circus, a disproportionate image in real life would distort the way you go about your daily tasks; whether it be the cloths you wore, how you put on your makeup or styled your hair, or perceived yourself to be able or limited in functioning. And imagine the consequences of disciplining your children, dealing with a difficult boss, or suffering a significant lose from a distorted perspective.

When the picture of life in which we live is disproportionately focused, we put unnecessary energy into aspects of life which are either less vital or even destructive. Likewise, we ignore areas of life which are problems or actually vital to our flourishing. Such disproportional focus *twists* our image of what a flourishing life with God and others actually entails. Causing disillusionment and disorientation in our faith when we do not achieve prosperity and happiness or when our faith actually leads us to give sacrificially and seek the welfare of others over ourselves. *Compelling* us to be performers to gain prosperity and spectators searching out happiness. Thus sucking us into the *gravitational force* of the circus life; *even when we long for something more*.

So, how do we get out of the gravitational pull of the circus life in order that we might have a proportionate view of ourselves, our life circumstances and God? Through the practice of **Mindfulness**.

1 DISCOVERING OUR FAITH PRACTICE OF *MINDFULNESS*

Mindfulness is *paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment*. Attention is key. Attending is a bend toward, an orienting around. In other words, worship. When we practice Mindfulness, we are centering our attention on God as we engage in the present, in our emotions and experiences as they unfold.

Think about your own ability to focus, to be attentive. What helps you and keeps you from doing so?

2 PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Mindfulness can and will be something you can practice in the middle of any and all of life's situations. But, it begins by regularly practicing mindfulness through Scripture. The following exercise will help us become more comfortable with Mindfulness. In your GC, DNA group or doing so individually beforehand; have everyone share what they experienced. The give at least 30 minutes for the exercise.

- 1) Begin by praying Psalm 139:23-24.
- 2) Read Luke 9:57-62, paying attention to your breathing. Noticing the rhythm will help you slow down & be present.
- 3) Pay attention and write down what emotions the text evokes and what experiences come to your mind.
- 4) When your mind inevitably wanders, don't get frustrated. Rather, take note of your breathing once again and let the text guide you back to your emotions and experiences.
- 5) Pray your thoughts back to God. Asking him why you are feeling and remembering what you are, how these emotions & experiences align with his character and purposes or not, & where he is in the midst of you awareness.
- 6) Repeat! As long as you have time keep engaging your emotions & experiences with God, making every thought captive within his story (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
- 7) End by praying Psalm 51:10-12.
- 8) Share with your group what you discovered about God, yourself and your circumstances through this exercise.

3 CULTIVATING GRACE THROUGH *MINDFULNESS*

Mindfulness is only fruitful when it centers our emotions & experiences within God's Story. **Commit to practicing Mindfulness through the remainder of our time in the Psalms. Don't forget to write** down what you hear, experience, think, feel, question, are convicted by etc.!