

Welcome to the.....

Christian Mindfulness with Vital Connexions

Worship 9.30-9.45am

Session 1: Introducing Christian Mindfulness, 9.45-11.00am

Tea/Coffee: 11.00-11.30am

Session 2: Keys to developing a regular mindfulness practice,
11.30am to 1.00pm

Lunch: 1.00-2.00pm

Session 3: Mindfulness, Counselling and the Christian
Contemplative Tradition 2.00-3.30pm

Q&A Session: 3.30pm

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Thank you



Christian Mindfulness

Day Workshop – Session 1

“Introducing Christian Mindfulness”



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What is **Christian Mindfulness** ?

- Christian Mindfulness involves an exploration of the physical, spiritual and mental health benefits of mindfulness practices
- Christian Mindfulness accepts the final authority of the Bible for faith while also accepting that we can learn some things from other faith traditions.
- There is a great deal of overlap between Mindfulness and Christian forms of Meditative and Contemplative Prayer. These can greatly enrich our relationship with God.

Mindfulness – An Introduction 1

- My own story – How I was introduced to Mindfulness.
- One word definition - “Awareness” (Exercise 1)
- “Paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally, with kindness, as if your life depended on it”
Jon Kabat-Zinn
- A Christian working definition of mindfulness – “...the process of keeping one’s mind in the present moment, while staying non-judgementally detached from potentially destructive thoughts and feelings” (Symington & Symington)**

Mindfulness and Afflictive Thoughts



- “Unwrap the barbed wire of ruminative thought stories about yourself from your self and experience & release them” (Shaun Lambert)
- Graphic image of how ruminative thinking can restrict and restrain the heart and mind. The barbed wire of the inner critic afflicts self. The unwrapping is only possible through focused attention and awareness, a bit like unravelling a complicated knot.

Church History and Mindfulness 1

- “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair” Charles Spurgeon.
- John Calvin (1509-1564) "The knowledge of God and that of ourselves are connected. Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self." Calvin's Institutes of Christian Religion.
- Here John Calvin makes a link between knowing self and knowing God. Part of Mindfulness relates to a development of self-awareness which can aid a deepening relationship with God.
- “Sin is: in despair not wanting to be oneself before God... Faith is: that the self in being itself and wanting to be itself is grounded transparently in God.” Soren Kierkegaard 1813-1855

Church History and Mindfulness 2

- Jean Pierre de Caussade – French Jesuit Priest (1675-1751)
- In his book “Abandonment to Divine Providence“ he wrote about “The Sacrament of the present moment”
- Brother Lawrence (1614-1691) Carmelite monk
- Wrote “Practicing the Presence of God”
- In the final session today we will be exploring The Jesus Prayer (Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward) and Welcoming Prayer (part of Centring Prayer Practice)

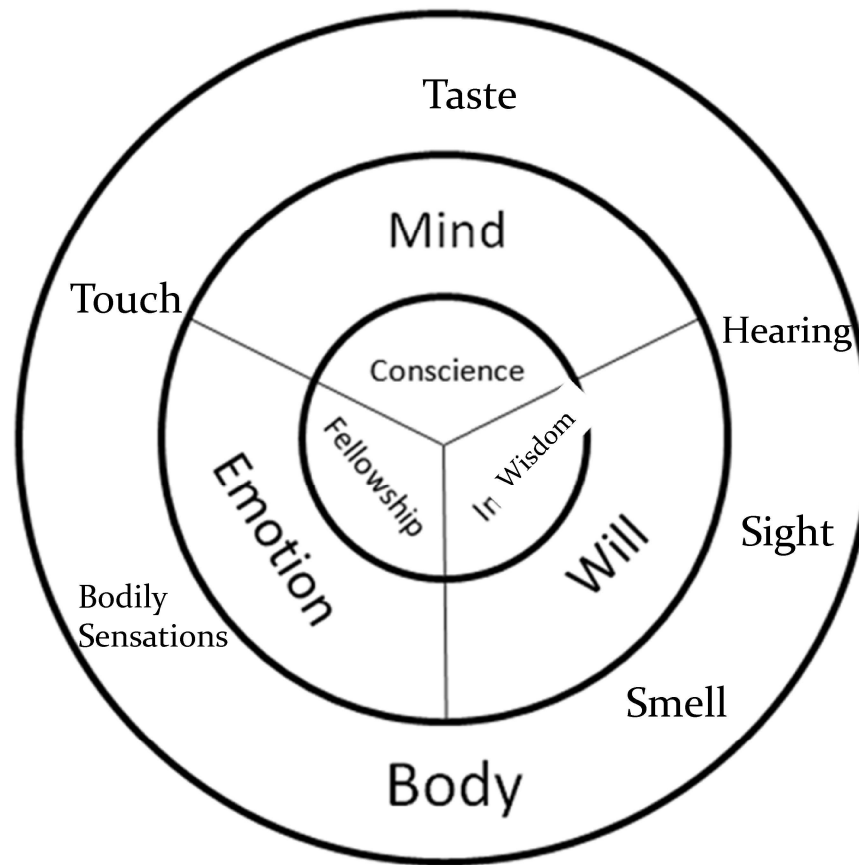
The benefits of Mindfulness 1

- Mindfulness and metanoia – Mindfulness enables detachment from harmful and negative thought patterns.
- The Greek word in the NT “metanoia” literally means “change your mind”
- Most English Bibles translate “metanoia” as “repent” or “repentance”
- At the point of awareness we have the opportunity to change our minds i.e. metanoia. Detachment is necessary.
- Mindfulness helps reduce worrying thoughts about the future. Jesus says “do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.” Matthew 6:34

The benefits of Mindfulness 2

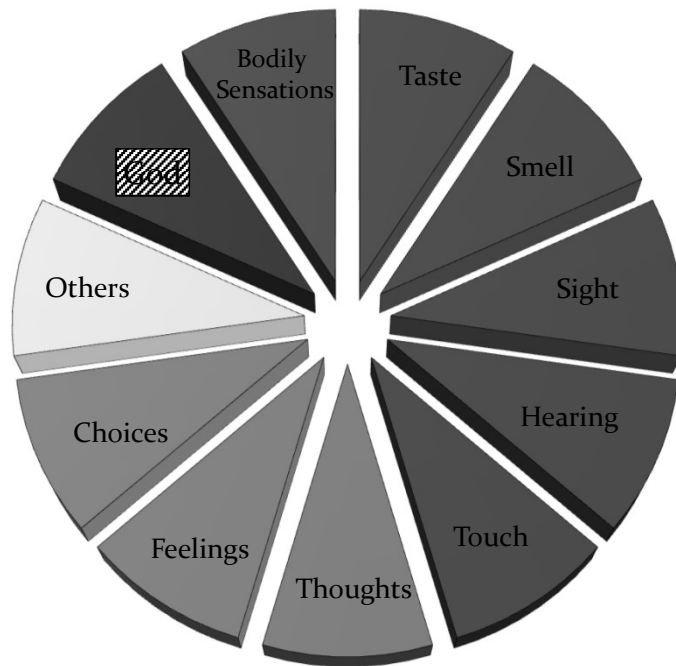
- Mindfulness helps reduce rumination and regrets about the past – “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14
- Mindfulness helps to cultivate an attitude of thankfulness. We are free to count our blessings and thank God because our minds are not crowded out with other thoughts or feelings. 1 Thess 5:18 – “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”
- Mindful awareness can help in the process of transformation as we rely on and depend on God’s Spirit and God’s grace in the process of change.

A Biblical understanding of body, soul and spirit - 1



²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹Thessalonians 5:23

In which areas can Mindfulness be beneficial?



•**BODY**

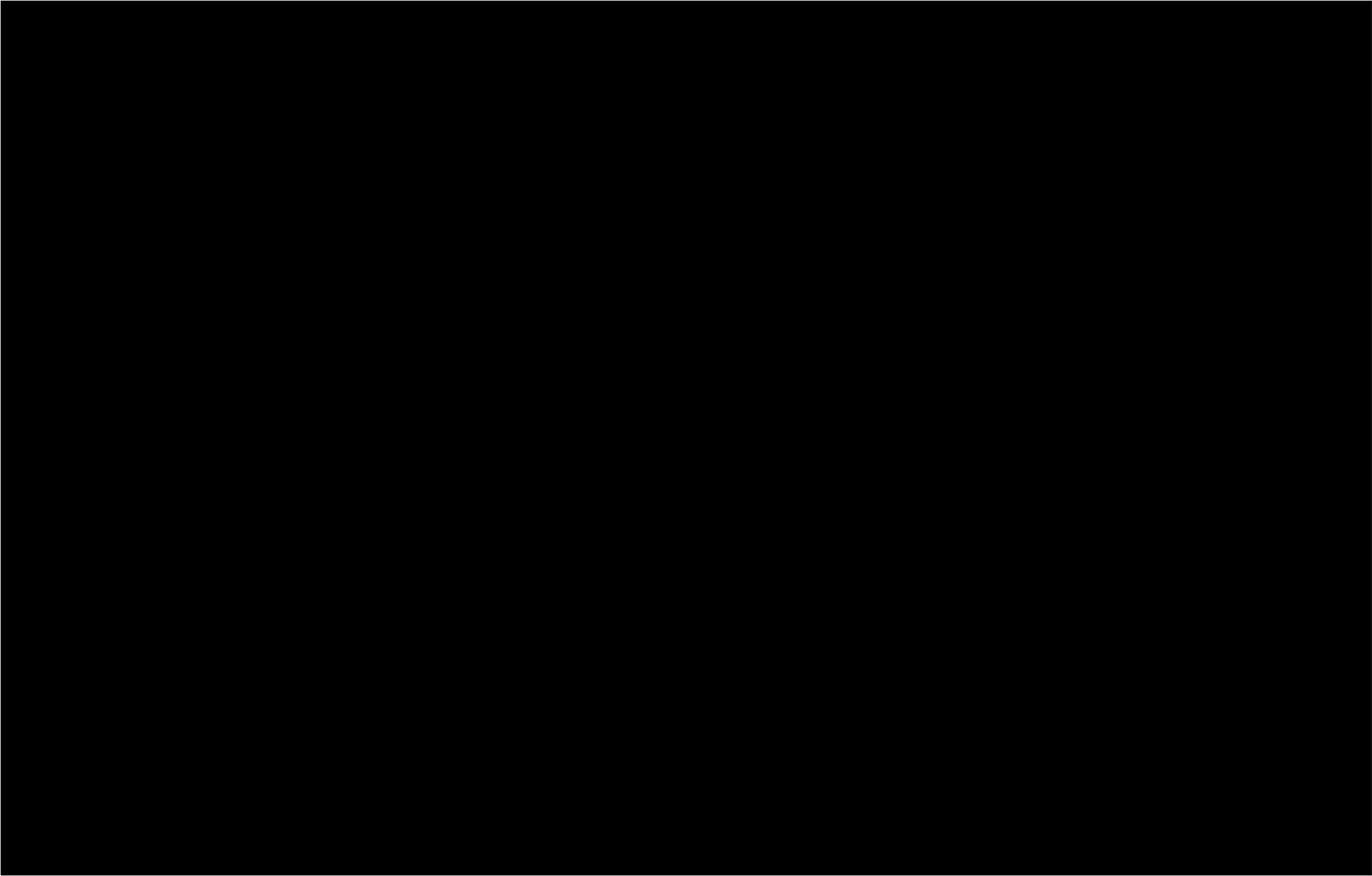
•**SOUL**

•**IN RELATIONSHIP
WITH OTHERS**

•**Spirit (your human spirit)
in relationship with God**

Stress, Mindfulness And The Brain

- Many research trials have now shown that regular Mindfulness Meditation actually changes the neural pathways in the brain
- This has been proven to help recovery from stress, depression, anxiety and many other conditions
- Watch Video clip 1 – How Mindfulness Effects the Brain



Introducing Mindfulness And Meditation

- We are going to have a brief discussion time in a few minutes (2s or 3s)
- Before we do that we are going to try out our first mindfulness meditation.
- Notice how this meditation integrates awareness of body, soul and spirit.
- The meditation is called a Breathing Space Meditation and lasts for only 4 minutes.

The Breathing Space Meditation Structure and Focus



Mind and Body
Weather Pattern?
Thoughts and Feelings
Sensations in the body



Breath and Spirit
Sensations of the
breath – In breath
and out breath.
Presence of Jesus



Breath, Body and Spirit
Expand focus around the
breath to include the whole
body. Come home to the body
and this moment. Presence of
Jesus with you

Breathing Space Meditation



Question for Reflection (10 mins)

- Break into 2s and 3s.
- In what ways are you currently aware of your stress levels and how you cope with stress?
- What do you think of when you hear the word “Meditation”?
- What are the differences between secular mindfulness and Christian Mindfulness practices?
- Scientific evidence now supports the benefits of Mindfulness, Meditation and Prayer. How should we respond to this?



Prayer Meditation
A Prayer of Accepted
Tenderness

Christian Mindfulness

Day Workshop – Session 2

“Keys to developing a regular
mindfulness practice”

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Meditation, Resistance and Growth 1

- In the previous session we explored self-awareness and God awareness meditation
- What was your experience?
- Did you experience restlessness?
- Did your mind wander? [Monkey mind]
- Mindfulness meditation involves re-training your mind
- When you are re-training your mind it's like going to the gym after being away a long time.

Meditation, Resistance and Growth 2

- Fitness, stamina and muscle strength take time to develop.
- This can be compared with “resistance” training.
- The resistance against meditation can come in various forms – busyness, boredom, negative questioning or critical thoughts.
- What are you hoping to gain from Meditation and Mindfulness?
- In the introductory session we looked at some of the Spiritual Benefits of Mindfulness.
- What are the health related benefits?



Intention, Attitude and Attention 1

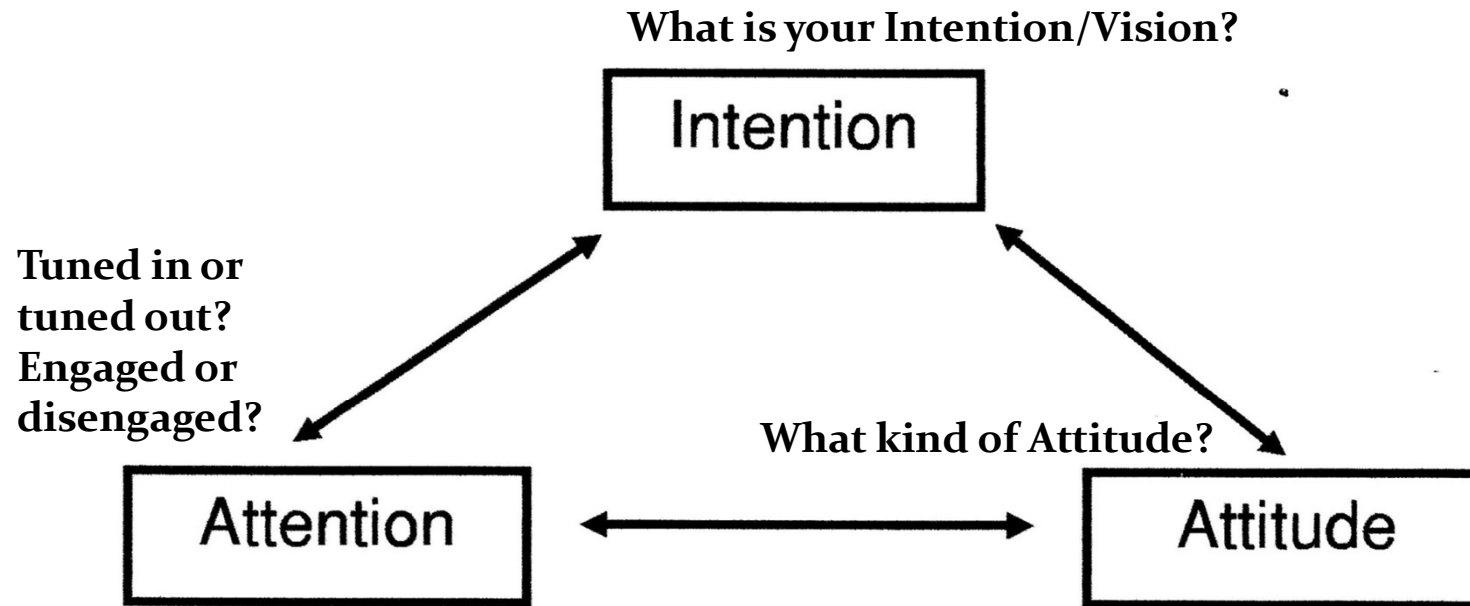


Figure 1. The three axioms of mindfulness, Intention, Attention, and Attitude, are not separate stages. They are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously. Mindfulness is this moment-to-moment process.

Source: Shapiro et al.

Intention, Attitude and Attention 2

- The reason some do not follow through and enjoy the benefits of meditation and mindfulness? >>>>
- Lack of clarity about your Intention, Attitude and Attention.
- If we can bring clarity to our thinking about meditation and mindfulness in these areas then it is more likely that we will persevere and reap the benefits.
- Consider now your Intention, Attitude and Attention.
- Make 3 lists describing these areas for yourself.
- For Example – Kindness is one word to describe the Attitude we should bring to mindfulness and seek to develop.
- Take 5 minutes now to write your 3 lists of words that describe your Intention, the qualities of your Attention and the qualities of your Attitude.

Attention

- Focus
- Clarity
- Single-minded
- One thing at a time
- Fix your gaze
- Tune in
- Be aware
- Pay attention
- Wake up
- Internal experience
- External experience
- To the whole self (body, soul and spirit)

Intention (Vision)

- Self-improvement
- Ambition
- Christ-likeness
- Obedience to God
- Awareness of God
- Emotional Stability
- Mind renewal
- Character transformation
- Stress Reduction
- Improve mood
- Treat Depression
- Resilience Training
- Pain Management
- Intimacy with God
- Hearing from God
- Better relationships
- Remove negative critical thinking
- Abide in Christ

Attitude

- Kindness
- Compassion
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Self-control
- Love
- Joyfulness
- Peacefulness
- Curiosity
- Awe and Wonder
- Non-striving
- Dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Trust in God
- Gratitude, thankfulness
- Playfulness

Intention, Attitude and Attention 3

- The effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in re-wiring the neural pathways of the brain depends on your long term commitment to PRACTICE.
- The Online Christian Mindfulness Course is designed to provide you with a variety of proven mindfulness tools.
- The effectiveness of those tools will depend on your own Intention (Vision), Attitude and Attention as you seek to grow and develop your own mindfulness and meditation practice.
- This is an exciting invitation into greater self-awareness and God awareness .
- It's not a quick and easy solution, but it does work and promote personal growth and wholeness.

Responding Or Reacting? 1

- When faced with new challenges and obstacles in life do you respond or react?
- With anxiety and fear – Expecting to be harmed or damaged? You feel trapped and despondent? (Like a mouse scurrying around in a maze)
- “This triggers the minds aversion pathways” - You develop avoidant behaviour to try to escape similar situations (Fight or flight).

Responding Or Reacting? 2

- “We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!” (Numbers 13:33, the other spies)
- Or – Do you respond with excitement and anticipation – Expecting to learn and be rewarded? You remain curious and playful.
- You face the challenges of life. You are willing to experiment, fail and learn. You believe reward is available.
- “Let us go up at once and possess it; we are well able to conquer it.” (Caleb in Numbers 13:30)

Responding Or Reacting? 3

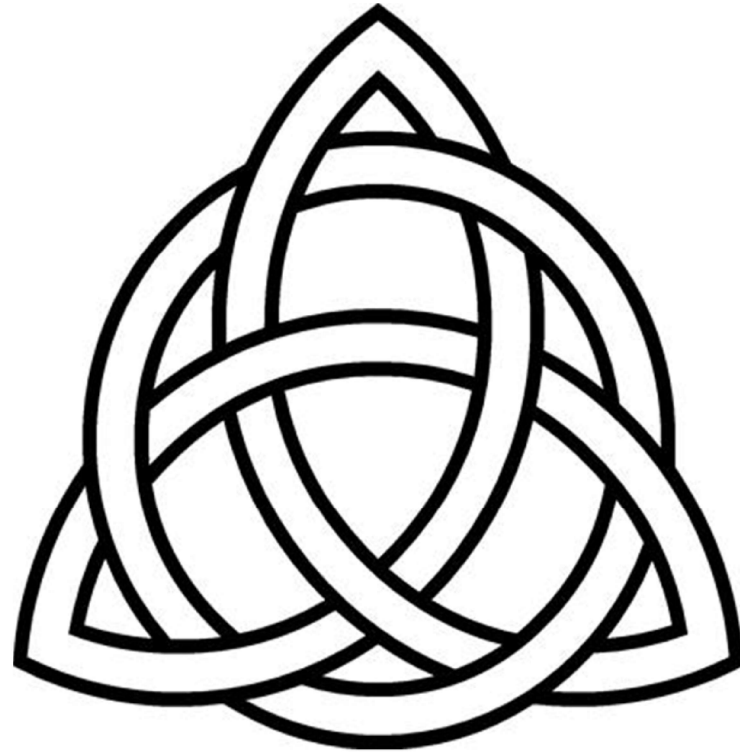
- Mindfulness meditation practice has been proven to dampen down those areas of the brain associated with fight and flight (the amygdalae)
- This means we can make decisions from a place of greater calm, equilibrium and peace.
- We step back and create space between ourselves and our situation so that we can respond and not react.
- Graham Cooke describes this as “stepping back into your spirit”.
- In our relationship with God this means we can be better positioned to access God’s Spirit and wisdom in the choices we make.
- Measured and calm v. Anxious and panicked

Responding Or Reacting? 3

- Williams and Penman say *“The spirit in which you do something is often as important as the act itself”*
- Mindfulness helps us identify our own underlying thoughts and feelings and gives us opportunity to change.
- This is not a short cut to avoiding life’s struggles. Mindfulness is about facing the reality of pain and moving through it to a better place.
- A Christian view includes praying through your struggles and making good choices while relying on the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit. “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

Mindfulness Exercise – Drawing the Line

- During this exercise observe your own thoughts and emotions.
- We are going to take 5 minutes in silence.
- Using a pen or pencil, copy the image provided....



What thoughts and feelings did you observe during this exercise?
What attitude did you bring to the exercise?

Drawing the Line – Some possible thoughts 1

- Excellent! I love drawing!
- I'm rubbish at drawing.
- What a stupid exercise!
- Why am I doing this?
- I've never been good at drawing.
- I hate making mistakes!
- I'm going to be so embarrassed!
- They are so much better than me.
- I've got better things to do with my time.
- Aim of the exercise – To help you be more aware of your own thoughts, feelings and attitude. Are you responding or reacting?

Mindfulness – Formal and Informal

- Formal Meditation is a common way of developing mindfulness and attention
- This can involve using a variety of anchors for focus – Body, Breath, Thoughts, Feelings, Scripture, Christ or aspects of the character and presence of God
- Informal mindfulness practice is just as valid and will also lay down new neural pathways in the brain
- It's about paying attention in this present moment
- Routine activities can be enriched through being more fully present to engage with the gift of this moment
- Here are some Informal Practices you can try out
















NOTICE

Engage with
your senses

Be Present Here and Now

Mindfulness of Body & Breath 1

- In this next meditation we seek to develop awareness of body and breath
- This approach has a strong tradition in the history of the church (see Genesis 2:8; 1 Cor 6:19)
- “There is a Christian tradition that advocates simple attention to the breath as an aid to deepening stillness” (Martin Laird *“Into the Silent Land”*)

Mindfulness of Body & Breath 2

- God is closer than the air you breathe.
- In the monastic tradition the breath has often been used in meditation as an anchor for our attention.
- “Because of its close proximity, breath becomes a powerful contemplative metaphor for the closeness of God” (P. Gregg Blanton *“Mind over marriage”*)
- “You cannot take a breath for five minutes ago, or for five minutes time. You can only take a breath for now” (Williams and Penman *“Mindfulness”*)

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Body and Breath Meditation



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Question for Reflection (10 mins)

- Describe to one another your thoughts and feelings during the Body & Breath Meditation.
- Were you able to maintain focus or did your mind wander?
- What is the value of this kind of mindfulness meditation for Christians?
- Feedback to Group 5 minutes

This Afternoon

- This afternoon we will be exploring how mindfulness relates to counselling and the Christian Contemplative Tradition
- We will also be trying out some Christian Contemplative Prayer practice.
- Break for Lunch now – Please be seated and ready for the afternoon session at 2.00pm.
- At 3.30pm there will be an opportunity for any questions.

Christian Mindfulness

Day Workshop – Session 3

Mindfulness, Counselling & the
Christian Contemplative Tradition

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Thank you



Mindfulness & Counselling

In what ways can mindfulness be beneficial and helpful for those involved in Counselling and Pastoral Work?

Mindfulness & Counselling

Brown, Marquis and Guiffrida suggest that Counsellors using mindfulness techniques should begin with –

1. Psychoeducation – Teach clients foundational elements regarding what mindfulness is and how it can impact tendencies to ruminate/worry/self-criticise
2. Instruct clients in basic mindfulness meditation techniques – Awareness of breath, body, thoughts, feelings – Using the breath as an anchor
3. Instruct clients in the use of more informal mindfulness practices (see examples in session 2)

**The Christian Mindfulness Online Course
provides an introduction to these 3 areas**



Mindfulness & Counselling

‘The simple practice of observing oneself with a non-judgmental, accepting attitude towards ones experience seems to create a state of emotional non-reactivity that is powerful and healing in and of itself’

Brown, Marquis and Guiffrida

Mindfulness & Counselling

‘The internal state of attentional freedom that is facilitated by mindfulness training can be considered a core process that is necessary in order for clients to engage in meaningful change’

Brown, Marquis and Guiffrida

Brainstorm & Discussion (3s or 4s)

What is the value of cultivating the following characteristics for the Counsellor and the Client?

- Present moment awareness 1
- Greater self-awareness (of whole self) 2
- Detachment from potentially destructive thoughts or feelings 3
- Reduced reactivity 4
- Acceptance v Denial/Suppression 5
- Emotional Resilience v Emotional Fragility 6
- Self-Compassion v Judgmentalism 7
- The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control 8

Meditation

Broadening Your View

- What is meditation? Bringing focussed attention using specific anchors
- Aim of Christian Mindfulness – To grow in self awareness, to grow in relationship with God, to grow in wisdom, to enjoy the spiritual and health related benefits of mindfulness
- Before we move on to explore Welcoming Prayer we are going to try something slightly different

Walking Meditation

- Using the body as an anchor we can gently shift our awareness from the mind into the body
- The aim is to gently bring your awareness into the present moment
- In the present moment we can experience stillness and reconnect with the peace and the presence of God
- Engage with the sensations in your own physical body
- If your mind wanders gently bring your awareness back to your physical body and any sensations you may feel (Anchor 1)

Walking Meditation

- You may also want to include other anchors for your awareness to rest upon
- As you walk slowly let your awareness rest on your breathing (Anchor 2)
- As you walk slowly let your awareness rest on the presence of God with you and in you (Anchor 3 - you may want to say the name Jesus)

Walking Meditation

10 Minute Silent Meditation



Feedback

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The Spiritual and Therapeutic Benefits of Christian Contemplative Prayer

- Connecting with the Healing Power of Divine Love in Silence
- Repressed thoughts, feelings and memories can emerge during Contemplative Prayer – we give time and space to see what arises.
- In this context kindness, forgiveness and self-compassion are important qualities to cultivate.

The Spiritual and Therapeutic Benefits of Contemplative Prayer

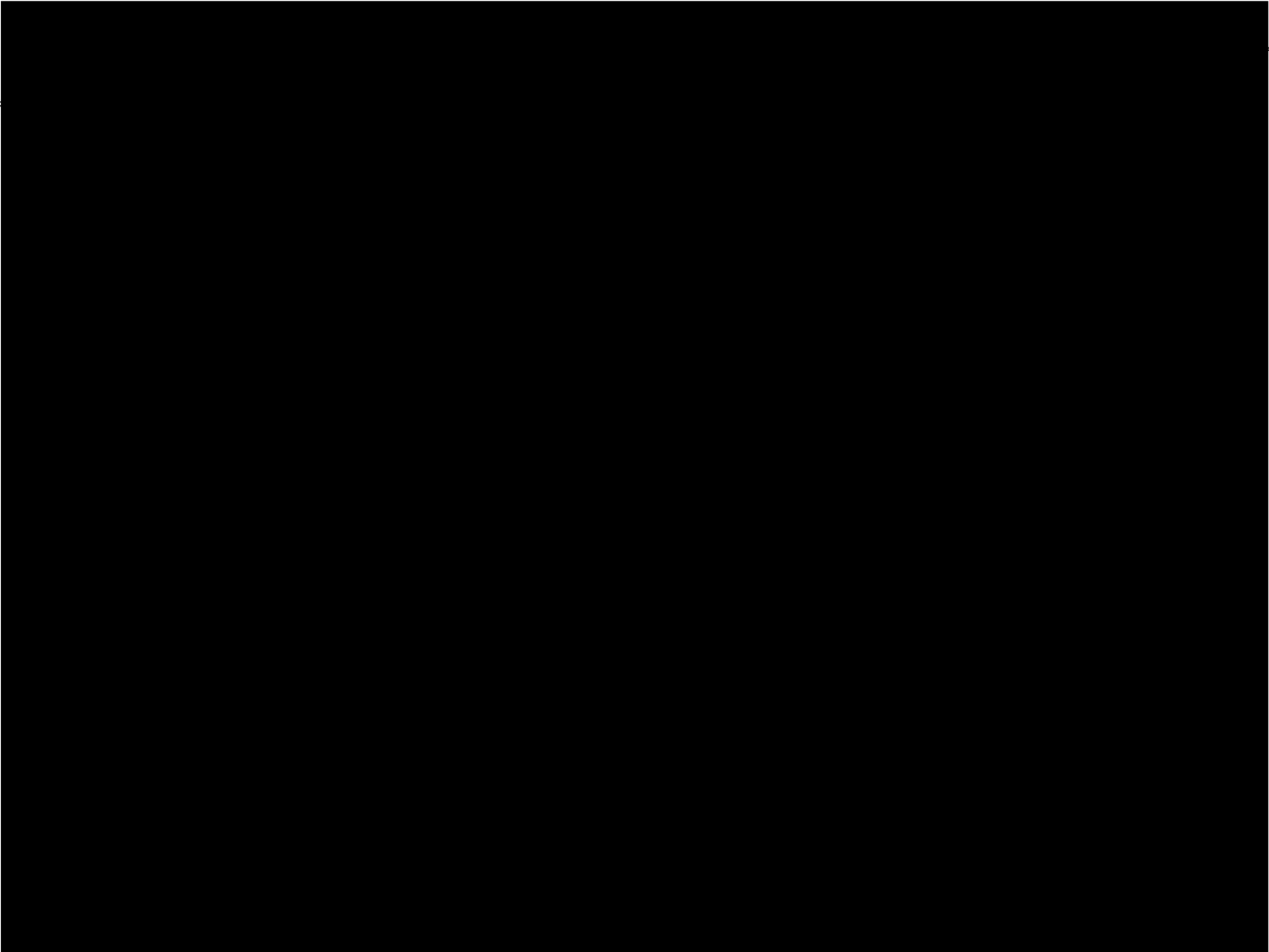
- As thoughts, feelings and memories emerge we can gently draw up closer to these without entering a discussion or debate in the mind (i.e. during the meditation)
- We allow ourselves to experience the reality of our honest thoughts and feelings.
- Healing can take place when we allow love, mercy, grace, compassion, patience and kindness into any areas of pain, hurt or wounding.

Welcoming Prayer – What is it?

- Involves acknowledging your emotions and feelings through embodied awareness
- You are encouraged to welcome and fully experience any emotions that may be locked in your physical body
- Intention: To experience and let go of emotions so that you can more fully surrender to the love of God in your innermost being
- Welcoming Prayer – Usually taught as part of Centring Prayer practice.

The Challenge of Welcoming Prayer

- It does involve facing up to more difficult thoughts and feelings
- If you do not feel ready to do this regarding a particular experience in your life then don't. Choose a different focus during the meditation
- If you have experienced some form of trauma in your life you may not feel ready to engage with particular thoughts/feelings – That's fine.
- As we practice Welcoming Prayer engage with the practice as much as you feel able.



Questions for Discussion (In 3s – 10 mins max)

- What was your experience of the Welcoming Prayer Meditation?
- Were you able to connect with particular thoughts/feelings? Describe.
- How could this approach be used in the context of a counselling session?

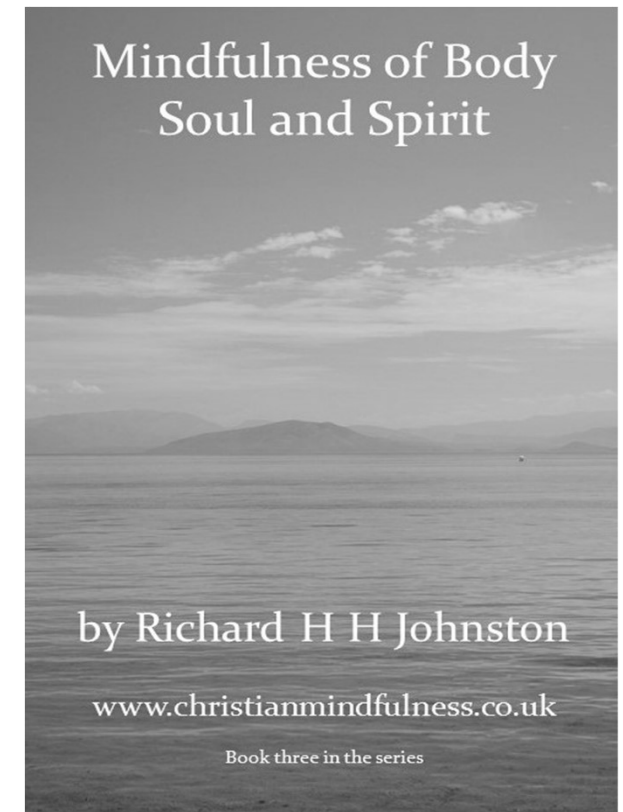
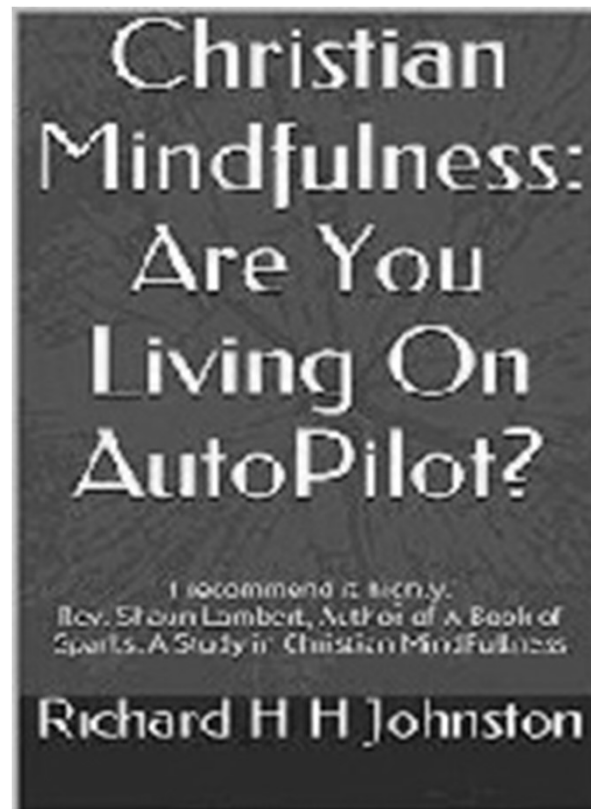
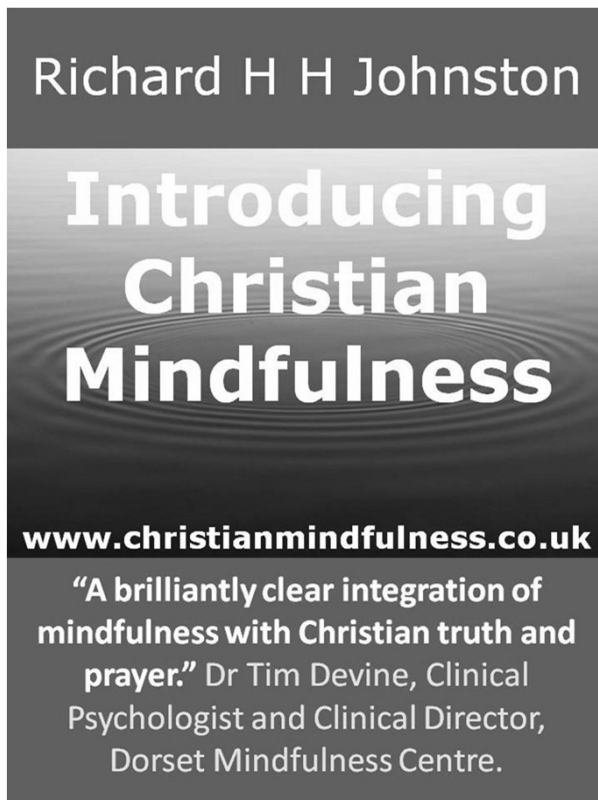
~~Christian Mindfulness – What Next?~~

Christian Mindfulness

Options for how you may want to explore Christian Mindfulness further -

1. Use the Online Course for CPD (currently being used in UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, etc.)
2. Use the Online Course in conjunction with clients who attend regular counselling sessions
3. Use and adapt the many Meditation Scripts available with the Silver or Gold package options
4. Consider hosting a Day Workshop in your local area. I have worked in partnership with Churches and Counselling Centres across the UK – Please speak to me or email.
5. Consider Annual License options to present the 8 week course

Christian Mindfulness – Three E Books Available



Special Offer Discount Code – Double Silver Package

- Only available for those who have attended this Vital Connexions workshop today
- TWO Online Courses for the price of one - £79
- Get all the Silver Package features for both the Christian Mindfulness AND Christian Contemplation courses
- 15 Online Course Sessions, New Bonus Session on Overcoming Depression, 2700 Minutes of Guided Mindfulness & Contemplation Meditations, 31 Meditation Script Pdfs, Free E Books
- Discount Code **A9ECF6DFE8** expires on Sunday 9th July

Feedback Forms

Question And Answer Session

