
PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



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What are Human Beings that You are Mindful of Them?



An Advent Perspective on MINDFULNESS

■ by Jessica Parks, MSW, LCSW

Mindfulness is often used in counseling as a component of the evidence-based treatment Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) for Borderline Personality Disorder and emotion dysregulation. In DBT, *mindfulness* refers to a principle of orientation to the present moment and non-judgment of thought that is rooted in Buddhist principles. It is meant to help people connect with themselves and their environment in a very intentional way, and to steer away from fretting about the future or the past by fully accepting the present moment.

While the specific brand of mindfulness used in many therapy offices is based on Buddhist principles, mindfulness itself is a concept richly rooted in our Biblical tradition. Psalm 8:4-6 talks about God being mindful, or sharply aware and considerate of, His people and their needs: *What are human beings that you are mindful of them... Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor* (NRSV). Time and time again throughout scripture, we are asked to use our minds - our awareness, our intelligence - in worship of God. We are even called to renew our minds so that we can discern God's will (Romans 12:2). Christian mindfulness serves the purpose of realigning us with God's word and will. It is a quiet moment of meditation on and reorientation to God's working in the world and in our minds.

As we prepare our hearts and minds once again for Christ's birth this Advent season, I encourage your family to incorporate a small mindfulness

practice into your tradition; make a discipline out of daily reorienting yourself and your family to God's word and work through focused awareness of His presence.

continued on p 4 "How to Forgive"

In This Issue

Page 2

Mental Illness: It's Time to TALK About It!!
Save the Date! May 7, 2015

Page 3

Responding to the Pain of Mental Illness

Page 4

SHOP and Support CCCC!

Mental Illness... It's time to TALK about it!!



**Do you have a heart for changing the way people think about mental illness?
Do you wish people understood what you/your family are going through?
Does your family suffer alone with mental health issues?**

We are excited about the event we are planning for next year. The event will feature **Amy Simpson**, speaker and author of the book "**Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission**". Drawing on her family's experience, Amy, a pastor's daughter, shares the social and physical realities of mental illness and explores new possibilities for ministry to this stigmatized group.

We are passionate about this topic and ask you to pray as we plan to bring together pastors, church leaders, supporters, and advocates to talk about how we can respond to mental illness.

If you or your church would like to be involved in this important event, please call Nancy at 708.845.5500 x103

continued on p 1
Advent Perspective on Mindfulness

Try this practice, or create your own:

- Gather the family at a time where nobody is going to be rushing to a game or meeting (perhaps at a family meal, or before bed).
- Pray and ask God to be present with you as you begin this new practice.
- Talk with your family about mindfulness as turning your awareness to God. Encourage all family members to focus solely on this activity, acknowledging then releasing distracting thoughts as they come.
- Light a candle.

- Read Isaiah 9:2: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.* (NRSV).
- Invite your family to look into the flame as it burns, and to notice any new understanding that God brings.
- After several minutes of quiet (or as long as your family needs), share your observations. Did God bring new awareness of the meaning of his birth? Did you struggle with distraction? Talk about this as a family.
- End in prayer, and return to the practice again tomorrow.

Practice of mindfulness can look like the exercise above, or can be as simple as sitting in a quiet place and noticing where God leads your thoughts. Have patience with yourself. It is called practice for a reason! Through habitual practice of the peaceful awareness of mindfulness, you can become better able to dismiss distraction and more aware of God's work in your heart - moment by moment.



Jessica Parks is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She enjoys working with clients in our Lombard & Orland Park, IL locations.

Responding to the Pain of Mental Illness

■ by Mel Jonkman, MDiv, Executive Director

On a snowy Saturday afternoon in January of this year, my wife and I were on our way home from Orland Park. As we traveled south on LaGrange, I noticed a person walking across the bridge over I-80. It struck me as odd especially since she stopped and looked west over the expressway. As we neared the end of the entrance ramp what had seemed odd turned surreal.

The person jumped off the bridge.



She had attempted to jump into the path of an oncoming Tractor/Trailer. Thankfully, the driver must have seen her and moved over just in time. The woman missed her intended target and landed in a heap on the expressway. Many people, including my wife and me, stopped and rushed to her aid. Eventually the police and paramedics arrived and she was taken to the hospital. I don't know what happened to her after that.

Obviously, the pain in her life was so great that from her perspective the only option was to end her life. The experience itself was troubling, but what made it even more troubling was that we had just left a church conference entitled: "Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission". Less than a mile away many people were gathered who would have helped her. A few miles further down the road is an agency whose mission is to attempt to help anyone who calls regardless of their ability to pay: Chicago Christian Counseling Center.

The featured speaker at the church conference that morning was author Amy Simpson. She is familiar with and passionate about responding to the pain caused by mental illness. Amy states "...25 percent of people who have sought treatment or help for mental illness have first gone to

a member of the clergy. This is more than have gone to psychiatrists or general medical doctors or anyone else. Not just anecdotally, but statistically, the church is the number-one place people go for help with mental illness."

You and I are the church. We need to respond.

During the next two months many of us will be giving thanks and celebrating the joy of family as we remember Christ's birth - but for others the days ahead will be darker and more lonely than ever before. Look around! Open your eyes and respond to the pain you see in others. Stand with them. Walk with them through the darkness. Listen to their story. Let them know it's OK to get help. Lighten their load as you share the burden of their pain.

Finally, would you also allow us to help you respond to the pain of children, couples, and families who need Christian therapy? Your tax-deductible donation will make that possible. May God bless you.

Donate securely online: <http://bit.ly/RespondToPain>
or mail your gift to CCCC, 15127 S 73rd Ave Suite G, Orland Park, IL 60462



"Having witnessed firsthand the healing power of God's love in combination with the care of a professional Christian counselor, I am passionate about the work that is done at Chicago Christian Counseling Center. When good professional counseling is linked to the message of God's grace, true healing can take place." ~ Mel Jonkman, MDiv, Executive Director



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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling,
consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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