



# Insights from SCA Staff

## What Does Mindfulness Look Like for a Christian?

Michelle Essary, MA, LPC

The alarm is going off and you twinge at the familiar sound, your mind and body beginning to wake for the day. That's when you notice your dog has been waiting too long to go out, your child just spilled something in the bedroom, and you forgot to set the coffee maker last night.

Maybe you didn't sleep well last night. Maybe you wake up to the ache of someone not present, or the dread of a day that overwhelms you with its demands before it even starts.

The reality is, we all have triggers and stresses throughout every day. Sometimes without seeing it coming, we begin to feel exhausted, frustrated, anxious or angry, and we need to take a minute to check in with what's really going on. This is where mindfulness fits.

For years, Christians have discussed and debated the origins of mindfulness, its spiritual safety, and its usefulness. I am a Christian and a professional counselor, and I believe there is a place for some mindfulness practices in the life of a Christian – practices that fit with God's design for us as healthy whole humans.

I'm writing this not as a defense of mindfulness, but as a practical guide for using it in your daily life. Mindfulness practices can aid our awareness of what is really happening, turning that information into opportunities for change, and, for Christians, an opportunity to interact with God.

One of my favorite mindfulness practices is loosely adapted from Dr Dan Siegel's "Wheel of Awareness." Find a place you can be still and think for a few minutes. This can be early or late in the day, or any time you need to feel more grounded. Taking a walk might be one of the best approaches.

Take a breath, ask God for clarity and direction, then consider the following questions:

1. What is happening around me? What are my five senses telling me right now?
2. What is going on with my body? Is anything tight or uncomfortable? What is my energy level? How does my heartbeat feel? My breath?
3. What am I feeling right now emotionally?
4. What is going through my mind? What am I thinking about and what am I thinking?
5. How connected do I feel to others? To God?
6. What are God's perspectives and desires regarding what I just described?

Now take a few minutes to pray through what you discovered, Give to God the things that you cannot or need not hold onto. Ask God for wisdom about what action you can take toward changing the things that you can change.

It can be a challenge, amid the noise and distractions or our busy lives, to pause and attune ourselves to the here and now. I hope this simple exercise. or another. can help you take that time and experience how God meets us in the still.