

Upright Woman



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Mindfulness... For the Will of the Lord

by Courtney Westbrook



Courtney is an Occupational Therapy Assistant working, primarily, in pediatrics and has been practicing for almost 7 years. She is married to Cody Westbrook and they have 2 boys, Jonah and Elijah. They currently attend the Southwest church of Christ in Austin, TX where Cody is the pulpit minister. She enjoys singing, coffee, girl time and crafting!

With the New Year coming upon us, we often look to popular trends, goals, desires, aspirations, and so on to better ourselves by making a list of New Year's resolutions, but how often do we allow spiritual items to take top priority? We sometimes allow worldly things to take precedence when making these various resolutions and lose sight of what should be most important to us.

Colossians 4:1-3 says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth..." When we become Christians, we should be overcome with a new perspective on life. We should be consumed with our transformation to becoming more like Christ and less like the world (Rom. 12:1-2). Spiritual things should always be most important. How can we accomplish this task in a world filled with difficulty, temptation, and distractions?

First, we must know God's Word. A student who is majoring in healthcare wouldn't fill his mind with the knowledge of fine arts. A Christian trying to be more Christ-like cannot truly understand how to do this without knowing His word; the Christian's textbook. We must let the word "dwell in us richly" (Col. 3:16) so that we can "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10).

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Doing this will allow us to be “pleasing to the Lord,” “being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col. 1:11). If we want to be wise and succeed in this path of life, we must understand the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17).

Second, we must fill our minds with things that are pure. Paul concludes Philippians by telling them, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:8). It’s easy to get wrapped up in worldly things, to listen to the most popular music, wear the trending styles, or watch what’s going viral on YouTube, but are these things giving glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31)? Are these things guiding us to Christ or to the world and, ultimately, Satan?

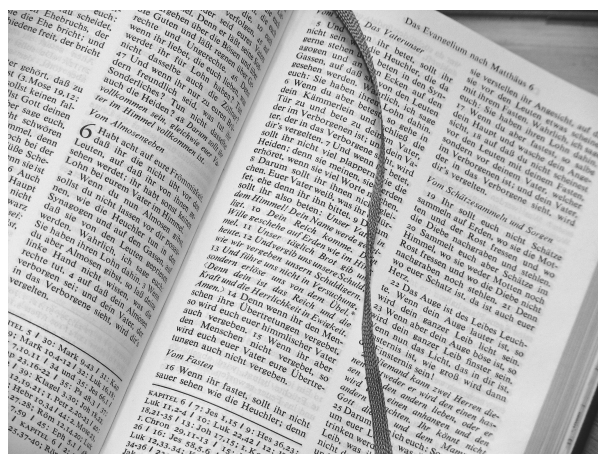
Finally, we must be mindful, or watchful, in our walk in this life. Webster defines mindfulness, as “the quality or state of being mindful” or “bearing in mind; being aware.” The concept of mindfulness is found many times throughout the scriptures and often is demonstrated by writers using words such as “watchfulness” and “awareness.” In Ephesians 5:15-16, we are told to look carefully how we walk and to make the best use of our time. Galatians 6:10 tells us to keep watch on ourselves and to do good as we have opportunity.

As we prepare for the new year, will we make spiritual matters our primary priority?

Mindfulness... In Prayer

by Gretchen Gerhardt

Do you ever feel like your prayer life isn't what it should be or could be? Do you struggle to pray in a mindful and purposeful way? Do you find yourself repeating the same lines to God time after time? Is prayer just an item on your to-do list, only praying at mealtimes and bedtime? Does your mind wander or do you fall asleep praying at night? If so, it's time to make an effort to have a deeper, more meaningful prayer life.



Throughout His time on earth, our Lord made time to pray, often going off alone to commune with the Father, sometimes all night long (Luke 6:12)! He always prayed before making big decisions or facing coming trials (John 17). If our Lord relied on prayer to see Him through, how much more must we need to have an active and meaningful prayer life? We are commanded to let the mind of Christ be in us (Phil. 2:5), and that would include following His example in prayer.

In the coming year, let us resolve to improve our prayers by being more mindful, fervent and heartfelt in our petitions to God. It will unleash the power we are promised by God (Matt. 21:22) and we will see the great things God can accomplish in our lives, our congregations, the church, and in the world!

Anything worth having requires work and that would include improving time spent in prayer. Dig deep and spend time in meditation (and prayer!), examining your personal prayer life. Be honest about it and make a list of goals. Then come up with a plan for an overhaul.

Here are a few suggestions, but find what works for you and be sure to reevaluate from time to time to avoid falling back into old habits.

- Remember to whom you are praying! Have an attitude of humility and awe as you approach God in prayer, like the publican in Luke 18:11-14.

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- Does your mind wander? It may seem strange at first but try praying out loud or saying shorter prayers focusing on quality rather than quantity.
- Don't think to pray as often as you should? Set a reminder throughout the day.
- Too busy to pray? Then you're too busy! Examine your priorities and make time for prayer.
- Don't know what to pray about? Keep a prayer journal or make each prayer about a specific topic (i.e. praise, thanksgiving, the lost, personal struggles).
- Discouraged about "unanswered" prayers? Read Jesus' parable about the persistent widow (Luke 18:1ff); also read Luke 11:5-13. Never give up!
- Do you find yourself repeating meaningless words and not giving thought to what you are saying? Work at training your mind to focus and stay in the moment and free from distractions.

Find a quiet place and spend time in prayer to your heavenly Father. A meaningful life is filled with meaningful and mindful prayer! Great blessings are to be found by those who are willing to put forth the effort!

Mindfulness... In My Daily Walk

by Wendy Gibson

Wake up. Drink coffee. Start laundry. Thaw meat for supper. Does this sound like the start of your day? Does your daily walk feel more like a triathlon? We have a to-do-list for each day, but where is God on our list? How can we be more mindful in our daily walk with God?

Two men in scriptures were said to have "walked with God": Enoch (Gen. 5:22-24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9). Enoch's faith pleased God (Heb. 11:5). Noah did "according to all that God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22). We learn in 1 Chronicles 17:3-4, 6 about Jehoshaphat and his behavior. Jehoshaphat "sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel...And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD..." Jehoshaphat stood out because he was mindful of the commandments of God and he sought to please Him. We must examine ourselves to determine how we spend our time every day (2 Cor. 13:5).

Steven Covey, author of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, said, "Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent, and not enough time on what is important." The first three steps he advised are: 1) Be proactive, 2) Begin with the end in mind, and 3) Put first things first.

First, be proactive. The term "proactive" means "creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened." Are we managing our time or does time manage to get away from us? James 4:13-16 reminds us our life is short and we must keep God's will at the forefront. Verse 17 reads, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Include the Lord's work in your daily plans.

Second, begin with the end in mind. At twelve years old, Jesus asked his parents, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Our endgame is the Father's work; reaching the lost and edifying the church.

Third, put first things first. Matthew 6:33 says "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Make a daily plan with God at the forefront.

We make time for important things. Are God's commandments significant to you? Your daily to-do-list will reflect the truth.

"Seek ye first, the kingdom of God"

Matthew 6:33

Mindfulness... In My Relationships

by Karen Speir

Life is fraught with many challenges that steal our focus and vie for our attention on a daily basis. Developing, maintaining, and valuing relationships can be one of the most difficult challenges we face in our walk as children of God. So how can we resolve to be more mindful of the people in our lives? Biblical mindfulness directs our focus, first, toward the most important relationship we have—our relationship with God. Second, we must be mindful of those loved ones with whom God has blessed us: our husbands, our children, our parents, our siblings. Third, we must be aware of those around us, be it our brothers and sisters in Christ or the visitors to our worship services and Bible classes. How can we be more mindful in all of these relationships?

First, we must go to God in prayer. Prayer is our avenue of communication with our heavenly Father. We must pray for knowledge, strength and wisdom in how to better our relationship first and foremost with the Father, and then our earthly relationships.

Second, we must have an attitude of mindfulness or thoughtfulness towards others. One of the barriers to having better relationships is rooted in selfishness. We're often so concerned about our own needs and tasks to be accomplished that we fail to be mindful of those around us. "But as we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men..." (Gal. 6:10). We must value and appreciate others on an individual basis.

Third, we must truly listen, we must "take heed how [we] hear" (Luke 8:18; 2 Cor.10:5). We know this is important in our study and application of God's Word to our lives, but how do we apply it in our personal relationships with family, friends and acquaintances? We can start by looking into people's eyes as they speak to us. This simple act not only reflects the attitude we just spoke of but also shows the respect, appreciation, love and care we have (or should have) for those around us and what they are saying.

Closely tied in with our listening, we must be mindful in our speech. James 1:19 tells us to be "quick to hear and slow to speak." We must resist the temptation to react to other people's words and actions and prayerfully respond. Many misunderstandings could be avoided if we are mindful both in our listening and in our subsequent responses. If our goal is to be more mindful in our relationships, more Christ-like, then we must put down our phones, turn off the TV, stop running through our to-do list, trying to be multi-tasking superwomen, and fully engage in each and every moment with those with whom we come in contact.

Let us resolve to be more mindful in all our relationships.

About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.

**"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE
LOVES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE
UPRIGHT SHALL BEHOLD HIS FACE."
PSALM 11:7**



We pray that with every issue and with every article all glory is given to God.