

# Global Connections: What is Mindfulness? Session One

- Williams and Kabat-Zinn define mindfulness as awareness itself, ‘Indeed, in essence, it is awareness itself, an entirely different and one might say, larger capacity than thought, since any and all thought and emotion can be held in awareness.’
- J. Mark G. Williams & Jon Kabat-Zinn, “Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins, and Multiple Applications at the Intersection of Science and Dharma,” in *Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins, and Applications*, eds. J. Mark G. Williams & Jon Kabat-Zinn (London: Routledge, 2013).
-

# Introducing mindfulness

- What is mindfulness? It is enhanced self-regulation, involving: attention regulation, Body awareness, emotion regulation, including reappraisal, exposure, extinction and reconsolidation, and a change in perspective on the self.
- These interact closely ‘to constitute a process of enhanced self-regulation.’
- Britta K. Holzel, et al., “How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action From a Conceptual and Neural Perspective,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 6(2011), 539, accessed May 25, 2016. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1745691611419671>.

# Other Mindfulness definitions

- Mindfulness is our universal capacity for awareness and attention.
- it is awareness itself, an entirely different and one might say, larger capacity than thought, since any and all thought and emotion can be held in awareness.'
- Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally

# Mindful Nation UK Report

- In essence, mindfulness - being about attention, awareness, relationality, and caring - is a universal human capacity, akin to our capacity for language acquisition. Jon Kabatt-Zinn, p. 10 Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group

# Mindfulness for health and of God

- Mindfulness for health and other applications has grown exponentially in recent years. However, the church does not feature in the market-place, and yet mindfulness has both biblical roots, and roots in the monastic tradition – what I would call mindfulness of God.

# Exponential increase since late 1990s

- The interest and activity in mindfulness has spread beyond medicine and, ‘Major developments are now occurring in clinical and health psychology, cognitive therapy, and neuroscience, and increasingly, there is growing interest, although presently at a lower level, in primary and secondary education, higher education, the law, business and leadership.’
- J. Mark G. Williams & Jon Kabat-Zinn, “Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins, and Multiple Applications at the Intersection of Science and Dharma,” 2.

# Some of the many conditions treated

- The UK Mental Health Foundation's 2010 *Mindfulness Report* lists a number of significant mental health conditions that mindfulness is being used for, through a number of different mindfulness-based or mindfulness-incorporating therapies, including depression, anxiety disorders, stress, chronic pain, psoriasis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, drug abuse, psychosis, eating disorders, self-harm, borderline personality disorder.' Mental Health Foundation (2010) *Mindfulness Report*, London, 9.

# Mindfulness

- An introduction to mindfulness for health and mindfulness of God
- Mindfulness practice isn't appropriate for everyone, and you may find that it is not suitable for your stage of life right now. Mindfulness invites us to turn our attention toward our experience, including its more challenging aspects, so if you are receiving counselling or medical treatment, it is especially important to seek professional advice before you begin mindfulness practice.

# Why, the Big Bang?

- In terms of our brain neuroscientists would say that we have a 'negativity bias.' Why is this? Burch and Penman put it like this, 'We are extremely good at anticipating and avoiding danger. But this has come at a price because it means we have evolved brain systems that focus by default on negative information.'
- Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness for Health – a practical guide to Relieving Pain, Reducing Stress and Restoring Wellbeing* (London: Piatkus, 2013), 157.
- Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness for Health – a practical guide to Relieving Pain, Reducing Stress and Restoring Wellbeing*, 158.

# Mindfulness: Setting the Scene

- Where does this fit in?
- Natural and incarnational theology...
- God is active 'in every aspect of his creation.'  
David Brown
- That means we can pay attention wherever  
we are
-

# Thoughts, feelings, memories, body are interconnected

- In our human minds when something triggers a stressful reaction, 'the mind begins to trawl through memories to try and find something that will explain *why* we are feeling like this...The result is that the brain's alarm signals start to be triggered not only by the *current* scare, but by *past* threats and *future* worries.' Mindfulness helps us SELF REGULATE all the different elements that stream into our minds.
- Mark Williams and Danny Penman, *Mindfulness – a practical guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, 27.

# Introducing mindfulness of God

- ‘He, therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity.’ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*
- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 10:5

# Mindfulness – the lost Gospel

- , ‘Let us keep our eyes always fixed on the depths of our heart with an unceasing mindfulness of God.’ Diadochus of Photike
- Quoted in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (London: New City, 2002) 204.

# Attention and awareness?

- What is awareness and attention?
- Awareness is conscious experience
- Attention refers to the cognitive mechanisms that control what enters awareness.
- Attention is 'awareness stretched *toward* something.' Tim Lomas, *Masculinity, Meditation and Mental Health* (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2014), 100,101.

# The importance of awareness

- ‘While we get a great deal of training in our education systems in thinking of all kinds, we have almost no exposure to the cultivation of intimacy with that other innate capacity of ours that we call awareness. Awareness is virtually transparent to us. We tend to be unaware of our awareness.’
- Williams & Kabat-Zinn, “Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins, and Multiple Applications at the Intersection of Science and Dharma,” 15.
-

# Mindfulness of God

- Mindfulness of God is our awareness stretched toward God.
- Our attention becomes attentiveness, a trait, a shape that looks like Jesus.
- Jesus modelled an embodied, relational mindfulness.

# Different levels of mindfulness

- Self-help
- Groups as with MBCT or MBSR
- Mindfulness incorporating (DBT, ACT) and mindfulness based therapies (MBCT)
- Mindfulness as practised in different faiths

# Central insight of mindfulness

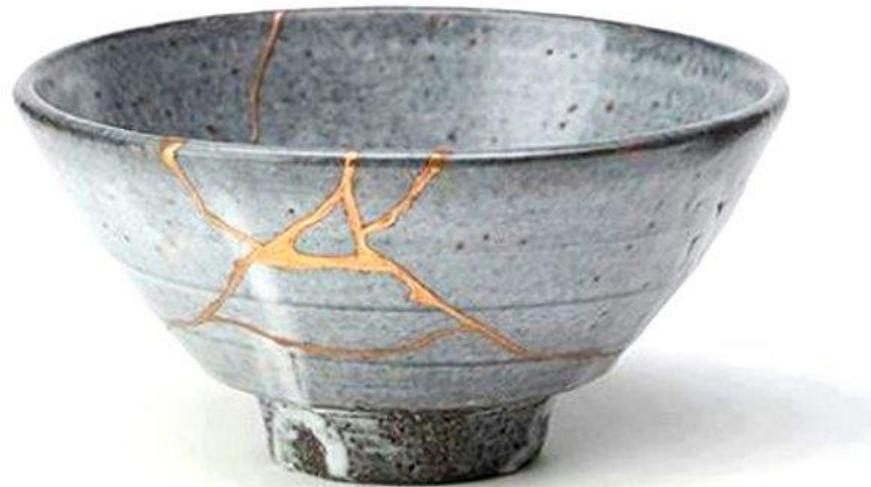
- The central insight of mindfulness, which secular psychologists, Christians, and Buddhists all can agree on is this:
- Am I my thoughts and feelings?

# Am I my thoughts and feelings?

- The answer is that I am bigger than my thoughts and feelings, I can observe them.
- If I am totally identified with my thoughts and feelings, and they are anxious and stressed then I will become a victim of my thoughts and feelings rather than a witness to them.

To repair with Gold

# KINTSUKUROI



**"to repair with gold"; the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver lacquer and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken.**

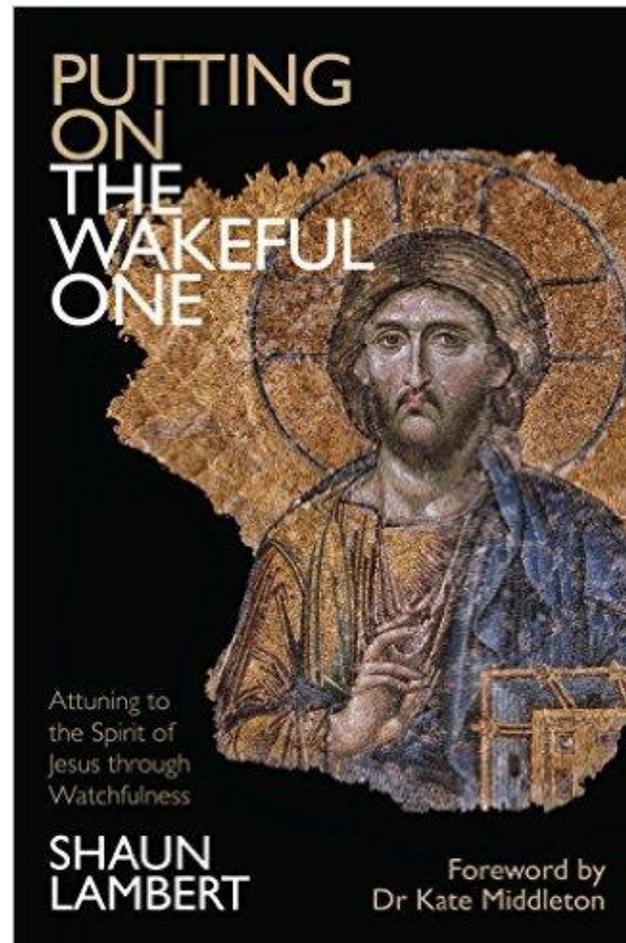
# The Mystical Boat by Odilon Redon



# Christ in the desert – Stanley Spencer



# A book that explores mindfulness of God



# A book that looks at Mindfulness from a Christian perspective

