Mindfulness & Meditation: Mindful Suffering

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Homework Review/Questions from Last Week

- Actively choose which seeds to water each day
  - pay attention to ways that life seems to change when you consciously water seeds of the things you want to experience
    - be on the lookout for things you do which cultivate experiences you may wish to minimize
    - adjust your involvement in these as life requires

- Practice, practice, practice
  - implement both formal and informal meditation daily
  - observe with curiosity the results of each

- Have fun, explore, be playful with your practice!
  - when we bring our full attention to anything, it becomes a richer experience...play with this idea!
Mindful Suffering

“When you know how to suffer well, you suffer a lot less.”
- Thich Nhat Hanh

- Caring for our emotional and physical suffering
- Experiencing positive things in the midst of suffering
When we experience something aversive we tend to:
- Elaborate/ruminate on it (which makes it bigger)
- Try to minimize it (which makes it more persistent)
  - Thus, we add a “2nd arrow” to our original injury which causes us to re-live the pain over and over

Coming back to the present moment provides refuge:
- This means observing the thought/feeling with curiosity as it is, without trying to make it anything else
  - Like watching a deer you stumble upon in the woods
Caring for Our Suffering

“Turning toward” our pain is an act of compassion for it and for ourselves

- Welcoming it warmly, to sit together with you in mindful awareness
  - “Hello depression! I am here for you! 😊”
- Making space for hardship as a natural part of life helps us create ease with it
  - Like giving a restless child space to be wild
- Caring for suffering in this way reduces our struggle with it
Positive Things Amidst the Suffering

- True reality is always bigger than one thought or emotion
  - When we focus on them they may become the whole of our attention, but they are never the whole of our reality
    - Waves in the ocean or clouds in the sky
  - Once they pass, we often forget how distressing they were
- While suffering is real, good things occurring alongside it are no less real
  - Observing mindfully helps us make contact with these good things, which alleviates or offers reprieve from suffering
    - Your breath is your home
Homework

• Practice mindfulness meditation daily
• Start with brief (5 minute) exercises
  - Practice observing physical and emotional pain as it is, without trying to make it something else
    - This takes courage! It is okay to be afraid!
  - Practice expanding your awareness to the good that is always occurring, even in the midst of suffering
• When mind wanders, elaborates, or wrestles with pain
  - Gently and persistently bring it back to curious and present observation
Thank You!

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& help spread the word to pastors about this FREE workshop I am doing for pastors about how to work with couples in their congregation who are suffering or seeking ways to improve their relationship:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/working-with-couples-workshop-tickets-54725119305