



## CENTERED Podcast – Week 1 Intro

November 29, 2020

**Kaley** - Hey, everybody. I'm Kaley Rodda and this is Centered - an exploration of spiritual practices for everyday life. We are so glad you are here. No matter your experiences with God or faith or prayer or spiritual practice, this is a podcast designed for anyone who would like to live life with just a little more balance and health, a little more centeredness and less distraction, a little more compassion, and less anxiety. We are so glad to be with you.

Today I am joined with Karl who is most formally known as the lead pastor of Centennial Covenant Church but in many ways he can be considered an advocate for a lifestyle of intentionality and a desire for wellness. So Karl, why don't you tell us a little bit about what makes you connected to and excited about the practice of centeredness.

**Karl** - Yeah, that's a great question Kaley. And like I said last week I, like so many people that I know, and that you guys listening probably know, I struggle with busyness. I struggle with distractedness. And I don't just struggle with it but I find it dissatisfying. And so, there's something that I see really interesting about this idea of mindfulness, or centeredness or stillness, I actually see it coming up in all sorts of places in our culture.

There are so many apps out there that focus on meditation or reflection. A lot of churches around the world are reengaging with these ancient practices that have always been part of the Christian faith. Even the gym I'm part of offers classes on meditation. So we're seeing people in all sorts of different sections of our American culture just longing for some way to become a little more centered.

And, you know, there is something about the way that we live our lives in modern culture that is clearly unfulfilling to many people. We're a little too busy, maybe we are caught up a little too much in ourselves or our own ideas, or there's something about the chaos in our lives and in our heads that we think we just can't slow down. And it's left a lot of people looking around saying what do I do about this?

So, for me, I want to live a life that has a little more meaning and substance to it. This podcast is a desire to connect with that longing that we see in so many places across our culture, and hopefully, to meaningfully connect with you, and your life as well.

**Kaley**- Yeah, that's awesome. As we were meeting to talk about this podcast we actually sat down and compared our meditation apps, that we all have, our different ways that this idea of meditation has kind of interrupted itself into our lives. And there's a hot debate right now about what app is the best, which offers the best program.

And in all honesty I think there's a lot of truth to what you were saying, Karl, just about how our culture is somehow shifting more towards this idea of connecting. Of taking and making intentional space in our lives to reflect, to process, or to just sit and relax. When people hear the word centeredness, I'm sure a lot of different ideas come to mind.

For me, often times it is connected with meditation, and this idea of making space, and sitting in stillness. But for a lot of other people it may come in a more physical aspect. Whether that's taking a walk, or a hike, or sitting by the ocean, or doing many different activities that we could find in our lives. So we believe that there's a reason all of these practices are gaining more attention in mainstream media- they work. They just provide this way for us to easily connect to ourselves, to our God, and gives us that resource at a very accessible rate. I mean, we all carry smart phones, we carry - some of us - smart watches, all these different resources that we have are just right at our finger tips.

So Karl, where along the road do you think we lost this emphasis on stillness? And why is it that it's coming back at this time?

**Karl-** That's a really fascinating question to consider. You know, obviously a lot of people chalk it up to the heavy technology use in our culture today. It's very clear that most people who have ever lived on planet earth had huge chunks of silence, and stillness, and darkness as part of their lives. I mean, before the lightbulb was invented, silence and stillness were inevitable for a major chunk of the day.

Whereas, for you and I in our lives, we have light and media and sound and noise. We can listen to a song, we can watch a movie, we can have endless hours of Youtube videos at our finger tips. Stillness has simply become a much more uncommon commodity in our daily lives. Other people will sometimes point to the kind of individualistic culture that we live in. People are a lot more focused on themselves and live caught up in their own minds and the activity of their own lives.

But you know, sometimes we can't help but feel maybe as a church have inadvertently contributed to it as well. We live in such a content-saturated world. There is more information, there's more to do or be or hear or read. And that content can become almost an addiction we always want more of.

So who knows which of those is really the culprit, but I think all of them are indicators of why so many people are longing to go back to some practices that have, for thousands of years, been crucial and central and life-giving to many, many people on earth.

**Kaley-** I think what is interesting is, as we are recording this, we are in a pandemic. And it's hard to ignore that because it has disrupted so many of our lives in so many different ways. But, I think what's been strange about this year is that suddenly, we have time. That we've never had before.

It's like, many people were furloughed and many people had their lives just radically changed in the way that they work, and their schedules, and all of these things. And so now we have time. I don't know if you feel the same way, but for me I almost feel even more drawn to distraction just because of this abundance of time.

**Karl-** Yeah it's interesting because we see that showing up in such different ways in people's lives. It's like we have more time because so much has been cancelled, and yet some of that time feels less available because maybe we have kids or we're working from home and our kids are schooling from home. And so, in some ways we have more time but in some ways the time we have is even more stressed than normal.

So we're all looking for ways to adapt. And we really hope that these practices become really accessible opportunities, in the midst of that changing life you're living right now, to find better purpose and use of whatever little bits of time you have.

**Kaley-** Thanks so much Karl. I think that gave me, at least, a lot to think about and wonder and reflect on. Thank you. So I'm just going to give a little idea of what this first week of this podcast is going to look like.

So, we will be discovering stillness, as we've been talking about, and specifically, Breath Prayer, and how it interacts with this very common form of breath prayer which is meditation. So this week, we will be releasing our episodes and I will be guiding you through a stillness practice, similar to a meditation. This includes being seated in a comfortable position, doing a body scan, where I will invite you to focus on releasing tension and turning your attention towards your body, and then we will turn our focus to the breath, and in that space, find an extended time of prayer.

Each of these ways that we kind of reconnect with ourselves is very important for different reasons. I think doing a body scan and being seated in a comfortable way kind of makes us aware of where we carry our tension. Throughout our lives we tend to focus a lot of our stress and show that in our body. And so, when we start turning our attention towards that it can be a lot easier for us to turn our attention towards our minds instead, and say where am I carrying tension in my body, but also in my mind. And how can I change that?

As we're doing a breath practice and focusing on our breath, breathing is something that I would argue a lot of us take for granted. We don't pay attention to the fact that we breathe. It's just such a natural thing that we do. But, obviously we all know, you don't breathe, you don't live. It's pretty essential. So, I think there's a lot of value to turning that attention that you have towards your breath, because it is such a natural thing. And it can really reconnect you to who you are, how you are living.

And then finally, just taking that time and space, and praying. I think there's very few times in our lives that we are able to quiet ourselves enough to fully have a conversation. But especially just to listen. To what God is calling us to do and what God is saying to us. So, I think as we explore taking that time to really allow God to speak to us, my hope is that we will find a lot of really interesting new revelations that we can be implementing into our lives.

There are many ways to practice stillness, and we want to make sure that you know that we do not expect every single one of these habits to work for you. For me, meditation is a really great way for me to reconnect with God and myself. But for some people it's really difficult to sit still.

Hopefully, in these next couple of weeks, you will experience other forms of centeredness that will work for you. If this week is not for you, that's okay. But I do want to encourage you to at least give it a try. Our hope for this podcast is that as we commit to you to create these episodes and just learn a lot about this together, that you will also commit to us to just trying it.

If you don't like this first episode, or you don't like the episodes that follow this week, we will have new content next week. And we are just excited that you are giving this an opportunity to maybe change the schedule of your life, or change the way that you are making time for prayer. And we really wholeheartedly believe in this journey of exploration through spiritual practices, and we genuinely cannot wait to share it with you.

So for the next five minutes, we are going to engage in a breath prayer practice together. Our first one of the week, how exciting!

So, I would ask that you start by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, but make sure that your body is still alert. And when you are ready, go ahead and close your eyes.

Notice the tensions in your neck, and your shoulders, possibly from or in anticipation of the stresses of your day. Pay attention to where you are carrying the weight of your anxiety. Maybe it's in the back of your neck, maybe it's in the top of your shoulders. And just focus on relaxing those muscles.

Slowly move your attention down your arms and legs, taking note of how you have yet to relax.

Now focus on the breath. Maintain a natural rhythm, feeling the rise and fall of your chest.

Notice where your breath feels strongest in your body. Maybe it's in your nose, maybe your chest, maybe your stomach. Put your attention there.

And if you notice that your mind begins to wander, gently bring it back to the breath.

One of the most traditional breath prayers is known as "the Jesus Prayer"

It's found in Mark 10:47, and it goes like this:

"Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"

As you are focusing on your breath, I would encourage you to pray these words with me.

As you inhale, pray the words "Lord Jesus, Son of God"

And as you exhale, pray "have mercy on me, a sinner"

Repeat this a few times.

How is God calling you to respond to this prayer of confession? Maybe it's in the form of a person, being put on your heart. Or a situation that you may have handled in a way that you were not proud of. Or maybe it's this idea of distraction. Of living our lives without the guidance of our savior. Reflect on how God is calling you to respond today.

Again, let's pray together.

As you inhale, pray "Lord Jesus, Son of God"

And as you exhale, "have mercy on me, a sinner"

Now slowly move your fingers and toes, awakening the body. And when you are ready, open your eyes.

Thank you so much for joining me today, as we start our first week in the centeredness podcast on breath prayer. We will be releasing three more episodes this week, and we are so excited to see you back here again.