



CENTERED Podcast – Week 2, Intro

December 6, 2020

David: Hey, everybody. I'm David Dillon and this is Centered - an exploration of spiritual practices for everyday life. We are so glad you are here. No matter your experience with God, faith, 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.

If you were with us last week, you'll recall that we made a case for seeking regular times of stillness or centeredness as a means of flourishing in a culture that thrives on busyness. Frenetic and constant busyness is unhealthy. And yet we tend to be rewarded in our professions and in our lifestyles for being busy. It's kind of a badge of honor when you ask someone how they are doing and they answer, "Oh, I'm so busy." It's seductive isn't? I mean, if I am busy, that means I am being productive; and if I am productive, then I am valued and esteemed by my boss and others. But does that reasoning really hold up to reality?

A musical analogy struck me this week, which for those of you who know me should come as no surprise! There is a famous saying among jazz musicians to learn to "PLAY THE RESTS." I was searching the web this week to see if I could find the origins of that quote, and I came up short. But I did find a couple of great quotes from trumpeter and band leader Miles Davis that communicate that idea. He said:

"In music, silence is more important than sound."

And then on another occasion he said, "I always listen to what I can leave out."

Now Miles was in a culture where playing fast and furious was really popular, and he kind of reacted to that. He was able to do that, but he said, "No, I want to always listen to what I can leave out."

I think that is a great rule to live by. We are richly blessed to have so much information available at our fingertips, and in many ways, there are so many good opportunities out there for us to engage in, probably more than any other time in history. But what if we started each day by considering "What can I leave out?" so that I can then create a little space for reflection and centeredness?

This week I am delighted to be joined by a very special guest and friend, Stina Hoberecht, who is a licensed counselor, a Registered Dance/Movement Therapist, and certified as a trauma-informed yoga teacher. So welcome, Stina!

Stina: Thanks! It's great to be here!

David: Stina, before we get into today's topic, I wondered if you had any additional comments or reflections on this issue of busyness that is so pervasive in our culture?

Stina: Yeah, you know, the term “balance” comes to mind. Busyness is something that we love and we hate. And as you said we are rewarded for being busy, but it comes at a cost. I believe in our hyper-driven culture that we’ve lost the art of being still with ourselves, with others, and with God. We’re out of balance. There may even be fear around being still for what we may or may not find within ourselves. So I love the way that you and Kaley and Karl are seeking to introduce us - or maybe remind us - of why stillness and centeredness are critical if we are to thrive. And I really loved the practical exercises that Kaley led us in last week using the breath prayer.

David: Yes, I was struck too how Kaley first had us pay attention to our bodies before each practice of breath prayer – that in a sense we had to physically still ourselves and even slow down our heart rate before we could really enter into centered contemplation. And that’s what we want to develop this week, and why I am so excited to have you with us – to help us understand that connection between our physical selves and that intangible part of who we are.

So Stina, as I said, you are a therapist, and at times you have incorporated physical movement as a means of seeking health and healing for your clients. So two questions: What in your journey led you to pursue that professionally? And 2) how have you seen it benefit your clients?

Stina: Yeah, you know, I really feel like God led me into this unique career. I grew up taking dance lessons, which just gave me so much joy and was also a great creative outlet. So when I discovered the field of Dance Therapy I thought that would be such a great way to combine my love of dance with my passion for helping people. When I do therapy with the patients at the hospital where I work, it really looks a lot of different ways. Sometimes we do a regular yoga class, sometimes we try expressing emotions through creative movement, and sometimes we focus more internally, cultivating that body-mind connection.

I like to view it this way: most of us have separated ourselves into pieces in some way. We become disconnected from our physical selves - either because we’ve learned that the “flesh” is sinful, or maybe because we’ve suffered abuse, or because we come from a culture that values intellect above everything else. We also separate ourselves from the parts that we don’t like - like jealousy, judgement, shame - we pretend like those parts don’t exist. But, if we’re broken into pieces, we can’t be whole. My approach in therapy - whether that’s through yoga or creative movement - is to help people bring those pieces back together in a healthy way so that we can be more whole.

David: It sounds like you are taking on that age-old heresy of Gnosticism, which in its fragmented world-view it teaches that spirit is good and flesh is evil. So you see our bodies and how we treat them as critical to seeking inner centeredness?

Stina: Yes! Absolutely. One thing that has really struck me, both when I was studying psychology and in my professional experience, is just how amazing these bodies that God has designed really are. God created our bodies to work best when we move - there are certain systems in our bodies that actually rely on us moving around to work properly. And the ways that our physical health and our emotional health are so interconnected, which is what I really draw on in therapy. You know, God knew what he was doing, and now we have scientific research that really shows us just how much taking care of our physical bodies is an essential part of emotional and spiritual health.

David: That's great and I am excited to hear more from you on this vital connection between our bodies and inner selves. Let's take a look at where we will be going for the rest of this week with the three episodes of practice that will air on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

So, tomorrow I am looking forward to having us explore walking as a means of prayer and centeredness. By this I am not talking about "prayer walking" as in let's go out and pray for our neighbors and communities that they would discover who God is. While that's an important practice, it isn't our focus here. Rather, I want us to consider walking as a means of opening up ourselves to God and to our surroundings. I want us to actually consider believing that God might have something to say to us if we would only still ourselves long enough to listen. Ironically, walking can be a marvelous way to still ourselves! How's that for a paradox!

Stina, tell us about what we can expect on Wednesday, when you will join us again on the podcast to guide us in another practice.

Stina: Yeah, our second practice on Wednesday we're going to try out a little bit of yoga, as a way of drawing ourselves closer to Jesus. And there are lots of different ways to do yoga; we're just going to try out a little sample to see what you think.

David: That's great. And then on Friday we'll be back, and I have a practice that I am really looking forward to sharing, and I'll warn you, that it is a little outside of the box. I call it "Seeing Through a New Lens" and literally I am going to have you use the camera on your phone as a tool: as a way of learning to notice more about your surroundings and how they might be a reflection of what is going on inside of you. When we are busy, we notice less. Hence, if we can learn how to see things more deeply and be more attentive to the world around us, that becomes a great means for combating busyness.

So there you have it. And I should probably say one more thing about this week. Whereas last week, Kaley led us through some excellent practices right on the air, this week, since some of what we will be doing requires getting out and moving, some of these practice sessions will be more teaching, and then you'll have "homework" to go out and try.

As we've said previously, we would love your feedback and comments about your engagement with these practices. You can do that through our social media links which are in the description of this podcast. And then of course, if these podcasts have been helpful to you, please subscribe or follow them and then also share them with your friends.

Stina, before we sign off today I wondered if you would take a couple minutes to give us a little taste of a practice that helps us make this connection between body and soul?

Stina: Absolutely. Let's take just a minute to do a quick practice that I love to use for, just, getting centered.

So, you might sit up a little bit taller wherever you're sitting. Maybe, sit with your feet flat on the floor. See if you can relax your shoulders and make yourself a little taller.

Then go ahead and place one hand on your heart, and one hand on your stomach, just so you can feel your breath.

You can close your eyes if you want to.

Take a couple of breaths. Just tuning in to yourself.

Take a moment to notice - what does your breath feel like?

Take a moment to notice - what does your heartbeat feel like?

And take a moment to notice your body - what does it feel like to be sitting in your chair?

Then take just a moment to find a little gratitude for each of those things.

Giving thanks to God for your breath.

Giving thanks to God for your heartbeat.

And giving thanks to God for your body.

And I always like to say, I know our bodies are not perfect, and oftentimes our relationship with them is complicated. But I still want to be grateful for my body. For giving me a place to live, and giving me a way to experience this crazy thing that we call "life."

Now just take another breath or two.

And when you're ready you can open your eyes, shake it out, take a stretch, whatever feels good.

David: Stina, thanks so much. Appreciate you being here with us today, and thank you for joining us on this podcast, and please stay tuned for coming practices this week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. God bless you.