



## E-Encouragement #3

### *Set Your Heart*

*“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on the things above...set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3:1-2, NIV)*

As we journey together on learning to live life from the Center, I must pause from time to time and share with you my personal journey. You need to know up front that I am on this journey with you and that by no means have mastered any of this. The last E-Encouragement was on *Returning*. You were challenged to make space for God, to be quiet and still before Him. I pray that you are trying to do this. Then, I wonder if you have been frustrated like me, because trying to quiet our mind down is one of the hardest things to conquer. Disciplining my mind is right up there with the difficulty of resisting mouth watering sweet treats, like moist chocolate cake, a necessary object to hold the rich butter cream icing which I have been tempted with at multiple graduation parties recently. Stopping my mind from wandering is far more challenging.

We learned in the *Returning* E-Encouragement that creating space can happen anywhere, but we first need to stop, then relax, then open ourselves up to God. Once you have bounded over the obstacle of finding the time in a car or a quiet moment at home to actually stop and create space for God, the idea of taking a few breaths to relax our body comes with great eagerness. However, the next obstacle is like climbing the Mt. Everest of our mind. We take in our moment of settling down and trying to be still before God, only to find 29,035 feet of various thoughts to climb over. Quieting our minds seems impossible.

I have been reading in a devotional book based on the writings of Theresa of Avila, a sixteenth century “Carmelite” nun who lived in Spain. She devoted herself to praying and listening to God. She wrote:

There are many people like this...those who find their thoughts wandering so much they cannot concentrate upon one thing. Those people are plagued with a restless soul. Therefore, when they try to fix their thoughts upon God, they are attacked by a thousand foolish distractions. Or they wind up fretting over their sins and failures in scrupulous detail – and so they spend all their time fixed upon themselves and wonder why their times of devotion are so unpleasant. And of course all manner of doubts rush in upon the restless soul... **We must learn to follow the spiritual path without being sidetracked.** (Majestic Is Your Name, Bethany House Publishers, arranged by David Hazzard, 1993, pages 48, 49)

I think that sometimes we excuse our undisciplined minds as an unfortunate result of living in a chaotic culture. Our lives are indeed too busy, but then we top off a hectic life with a bombardment of media

stimulus. We give in and think it is a hopeless Endeavour. Theresa wrote this in the 1500's. Columbus had just discovered America.

The apostle Paul, even hundreds of years earlier, understood this raging battle of our mind.

*"but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin..."* (Romans 7:23)

*"To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."* (Romans 8:6)

*"...my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive. What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also..."* (Romans 14:14-15)

*"You were taught to put away your former way of life...and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds."* (Ephesians 4:22-23)

*"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me and the God of peace will be with you.**"* (Philippians 4:8-9)

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts on the things above...set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**"* (Colossians 3:1-2, NIV)

The battle of the mind has existed throughout the ages. Take heart, though, as Teresa stated, "**we must learn to follow the spiritual path without being sidetracked.**" Disciplining our mind can be learned. (Philippians 4:9) It is part of the process we can undergo of becoming more Christ like, taking another step towards the abundant life and the complete joy we are promised by Jesus. (John 10:10, 15:11)

I encourage you to press on and pursue disciplining your mind. (Philippians 3:12-16) It will be worth it. Keep attempting to create space for God throughout your day, returning to Him. This is your strength. (Isaiah 30:15) Do not grow weary from doing this good thing, do not lose heart but rather **set your heart towards a mind that focuses on God.** You will reap at harvest time, if you do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

Get ready for the next two or three E-Encouragements, they'll be a little "rocky." Until then, keep living out of the Center!

Let the Wagon Wheel roll:

- We are on number three in a series of E-Encouragements titled Living Out of the Center. If you have missed the first two, please visit our website at [www.southshorechurch.com](http://www.southshorechurch.com); go to ministries and then women. On the page on the left hand column you will find all the LOC emails.
- Set your heart on the practice of returning. Stop right now and practice!
- Did I mention, keep trying and don't give up!

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