

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

86. The Distraction of a Busy Mind Says, "Think About This"

You are listening to episode 86 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "The Distraction of a Busy Mind Says, "Think About This." Thank you for joining me here on the podcast today! I'm thrilled you are here! For some time now we've been exploring the many different distractions that can plague us on any given day. We've covered many of these, but the list of distractions seems to be endless! How is it possible to live less distracted, and is it possible? I say it is, but we can't do it on our own, but with God's help we can. Hang with me here for the next short while and we'll find some help and hope as we dig into this common distraction of a busy mind. So, let's get to it.

Last week, in the spur of the moment, I created a questionnaire regarding distractions and what we are typically distracted by. I sent it out to a few online groups I'm a part of and posted it on my own socials, and let me tell you, the results are enlightening! I'm learning much from those who took this five-minute questionnaire regarding everyday distractions, what are the biggest distractions, what is done to combat them, and what help the responders would welcome in their lives regarding distractions. I think this may be one of the best things I've ever done to truly understand the impact distractions have in our lives! If you're interested in giving me your thoughts in this 5-minute questionnaire, the link to it is in the show notes.

One interesting distraction stands out to me, and it's one that plagues me often. It's the distraction of a busy mind. Now, I know. In episode 67 where we discussed busyness, I said I took the word "busy" out of my vocabulary and I often use the word "full" instead. For example, my schedule isn't busy, it's full. I don't live a busy life, I live a full life. And I even encouraged you to remove the word busy from your vocabulary, too. Yet here, I'm using it in an episode title. What gives? Well, I still don't like the word. But I don't think changing a "busy mind" to a "full mind" would give it the same word picture. Plus, a "full mind" seems a little confusing. Full of what?? So, for this episode only, I'm bringing the word busy back.

Because I think we all know what a busy mind is, right?

Arriving to our destination but not remembering fully driving there.

Leaving the house for the day but wondering, *did I turn the coffee pot off?*

Unable to fall asleep at night because your brain won't turn off.

Or pinballing thoughts such as *the car needs gas, my coffee is cold, I need to remember to order the birthday gift, why was my boss so grumpy yesterday?, what will I make for dinner tonight?, maybe she was mad at me, will I have enough gas to get home?, what if we just had cereal for dinner tonight?, looks like my friend on Facebook had a good vacation, I need to warm my coffee, I should text my friend, my hair needs cut*, all the while you're replying to an email.

Please don't tell me I'm the only one who has a busy mind.

And who has had such pinballing thoughts!

We've all experienced a busy mind, right? But maybe haven't defined what it truly is.

Busybrainsyndrome.com (yes, that's a real website) defines a busy brain as what happens when the brain runs out of processing bandwidth causing us to run on "autopilot" or to do our daily tasks unconsciously. This is a result of our complex digital world. As a result, 60% of what we see and hear goes unprocessed by our minds. 60%! Because our minds are overloaded.

This site reports the bombardment of the digital world negatively impacts our brains, so much so, our brains cannot handle all of the information it's forced to process. That's the reason the majority of information is filed in the 60% category of unconscious information. It's just waiting there, kinda like file folders in a filing cabinet, to be processed some day when we get around to it.

But will we ever get around to it?

Because I don't ever fathom the day when we'll have less information coming our way. No. I see the information our brains need to process as only increasing with each passing day.

And, I don't know about you, but I want to know what's in my 60% filing cabinet. I want to find out what's in my brain that I still need to process. Because likely, it could be something important. Something I can use. Something that would benefit me or others.

So, what do we do with these busy minds of ours? How do we unbusy them?

A busy mind says, "Think about this... then this... then this." But God says, "Focus on me."

Ahh, there's the solution.

Living with a busy mind is not God's best for us.

But living with a mind focused on Him is.

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Romans 12:2 MSG

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Isaiah 26:3 NLT

Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. Colossians 3:2 AMPC

Sounds good, doesn't it? But how do we do this?

How do we set our minds on God and keep them there?

Seek our Creator.

Well, friend, we cannot do this on our own. God designed our brains, and no One knows them better than Him. So, it makes sense we go straight to our Creator for the answers. We need God's help, equipping, and strength. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to fill us to overflowing, because on our own we can't unbusy our minds. But with Him, we can. So, prayer for His strength, equipping, and help is

vital. And prayer asking for God to renew our minds and fix our attention on Him throughout the day. Seeking and relying on Him is the first place to start.

Follow His prompting.

Since God formed each of us intricately and uniquely, He'll likely prompt us differently. Because what He may guide you to do may be different than how He may guide me. The important thing is to pay attention, to listen, to be sensitive to how the Holy Spirit prompts us. Maybe you might need a day off to just think and ponder with God, and maybe I might need to spend time recounting God's faithfulness in my life. Or vice versa. We don't know. But God does. And however He leads us, it's to our best interest if we follow. (We discussed that in episodes 83 and 84.)

Walk it out.

This is going to take some time. Our brains didn't get busy overnight, so realistically, it's going to be a journey to unbusy them. Sure, God can heal our brains in an instant, and maybe He will. That's a great thing to pray for, isn't it? No matter how He does it, let's just commit to walking it out with Him. Because He's going to teach us, mold us, and transform us through it. He'll use this for our growth, for the good of others, and for His glory. God never wastes what we leads us through.

Be willing to change.

As God does His transforming work within us, we may get a little uncomfortable. What we've always done may change to something we've never done. Like becoming a nap person mid-afternoon. Or turning our phones off at dinner. Or taking a mental health day off of work, with no plans except to take care of and fill ourselves back up. Be okay with change. Our brains will thank us for it.

God transforms our busy minds to blessed minds.

And when that happens, we become transformed, too.

So, do you think you have a busy mind? What's one step you can do today to unbusy it?

One tangible thing I do is when my busy mind goes racing, I take out my notebook and I write down every thought that's running through my mind. Every single thing that I can. Often times I'm not writing in sentences, but in just simple thoughts. Getting them out on paper gets them out of my head. Try it and see how it works for you, too.

Another thing I'm learning is to be okay with boredom.

As our family was flying to Florida for our family vacation earlier this month, my mind was busy but my body couldn't be. So, I tried to read. I attempted to sleep. I tried praying silently in my head. Then I finally turned to my husband and said, "I am so bored." It's possible a lightbulb glowed above my head at that moment because the words came to me, "Be okay with boredom." Okay, God. I'm listening. We with busy minds don't like boredom. We constantly have to be doing something, thinking of something, oftentimes with movement. So, instead of fighting the boredom, embracing it would be better. Because embracing boredom forces us to unbusy our minds. And sometimes it's in the boredom where we are still enough to hear God's quiet voice.

God designed our minds in amazing and incredible ways.

But is His best for us to have such busy minds? I say no. Giving our minds a rest may be the best thing we can do today, even if it's just for a few minutes at a time. Let's seek God in this and pay attention to how He leads us.

A busy mind is not the best mind.

We're taking this conversation over to our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. I invite you over there this week to join in the conversation as we discuss these busy minds of ours. You'll find the link to this group in the show notes.

Also, I'm doing a drawing for one of my favorite encouragement resources from everyone who leaves a review of the podcast before April 1, which is just a few days from the airing of this episode. Simply leave a review from wherever you're listening today, and you'll be entered into that drawing. This isn't sponsored or endorsed by anyone other than me who likes to bless others with gifts. I'll share the winner in next week's episode.

And if you're local to me, every quarter I host an evening of encouragement for women called, Real Encouragement LIVE! These are girls' night out kind of events where we gather to be inspired, encouraged, and have some fun. Our next one, Bloom Where You Are Planted, is March 30 (just two days from the airing of this episode) at 6:30 p.m. in Cedar Rapids. The link for details and tickets is in the show notes. I'd love to have you join me for this fun evening out!

In closing, I pray we commit to unbusyng our minds, not just for today, but to continue to work at it through God's equipping and leading. Our minds need some rest, too. I'm glad we can encourage one another in this and spur each other on. Our lives will only be as less distracted as our minds are. Thanks for being here today! God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre