

# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

## 90. The Distraction of a Wandering Mind Says, "Meander with Me"

listening to episode 90 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "The Distraction of a Wandering Mind Says, "Meander with Me." Welcome to the podcast! I'm glad you're here today. We continue our journey of highlighting and discussing the various distractions that may come our way on any given day. Today we're peering into the distraction that experts say many of us struggle with: the distraction of a wandering mind. We may call it something else like daydreaming or not staying mentally focused. Or getting sidetracked with our thoughts. But no matter, it's an important distraction to address. In episode 86 we discussed a busy mind. It may sound somewhat similar, but this distraction of a wandering mind is much different. Hang with me here and together we'll learn about this distraction, we'll ponder if it affects us, and what we can do about it. We'll find some encouragement and hope along the way. So, let's get to it.

American singer and songwriter, James Taylor, may have said it best in his song, *Wandering*. His words ring true for many as he indicated in song how it didn't look like he would ever stop his wandering. His wandering was likely his feet, but this can also apply to many of us with the wandering of our minds.

### **Do you have a wandering mind?**

You may not think you do, and I hope you don't. But I came across an interesting study conducted by two Harvard psychologists who say our human minds are wandering minds. So much so, nearly 47% of our waking hours are spent on thinking about something other than what we're doing in the moment. 47%!

We tend to spend much of our time thinking about other things than what's currently happening around us. We think about events of the past, of what might happen in the future, or about something that may never happen at all. Ever! Half of our waking time, according to this study!

Not only that, but it revealed something else. A phone app collected information as the subjects in the study documented what they were doing at different intervals throughout the day, if they were thinking about their current activity, and how happy they were in the moment.

The researchers came to the alarming conclusion that wandering minds are unhappy minds. Our ability to think about something else than our current activity is paying an emotional price. Mind-wandering was the cause, not the consequence, of the unhappiness of the subjects.

### **So, if our wandering minds are unhappy minds, this tells me our thoughts matter.**

What we allow our brains to think matters. (Because we do have a choice in that, by the way.) It also matters how we keep our thoughts centered on what's in front of us and what we're doing in the current moment.

Our thoughts affect our emotions, including our happiness and our unhappiness. But we probably already knew that didn't we? I'll say it again. What we think about matters.

God, in His Word, says so too.

*And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

Philippians 4:8 NLT

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

*So roll up your sleeves, get your head in the game, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives.* 1 Peter 1:13 MSG

### **Those are all powerful scriptures, aren't they?**

But the words in the last verse in The Message translation smacked me in the face when I read it today. Especially the words, "Get your head in the game." Oh, goodness, let me tell you, those six words make me shutter. And I didn't realize why until I paused to question today. Those words jogged my memory and transported me back in time to one of my high school basketball games. Of course, I can't remember what I did on the court or what mistake I made, but as clear as day, in my mind's eye, my coach's red face was before me as he yelled at me in our time-out huddle during the game with those very words. "Get your head in the game!" I have goosebumps even saying them!

You can bet I got my head in the game after that.

Englishlogica.com explains it this way: The idiom 'to get your head in the game' means to pay attention to what is going on or to focus on a task or goal without being distracted. You might tell someone to 'get your head in the game' if they are not performing well or being unfocused or to remind them to keep their mind on the task at hand.

Yep. And I don't think I've said or thought about those disturbing words since. But they are perfect for this distraction. Getting our heads in the game is the exact opposite of mind wandering. And from now on, I'll be thinking of that every time my mind begins to wander. "Julie, get your head in the game." Except I'll say it to myself with much more kindness and love than my coach did.

### **Today let's keep our heads in the game.**

Instead of letting our minds wander, how about you and I pay attention in every activity we do, when we do it. Let's concentrate on driving when we're driving and focus on making dinner when we're making dinner. Let's keep our minds on the present as we actively participate in a conversation with our spouse or child. And let's choose to keep our thoughts centered on right now. Because this moment matters.

My coach will tell you that as well. And so will God.

The distraction of a wandering mind says, "Meander with me." But God says, "I'm right here."

We have no reason to let our minds wander--or meander--if God is with us right here.

### **Our wandering minds will take us to all sorts of places, both good and not-so-good.**

Our wandering minds will keep us preoccupied with other things that aren't as important as the moment we're in. Even if we think the moment we're in is boring and mundane. Because as I've mentioned before, God is in the here and now. Now is where we meet Him. His grace is sufficient, right now. His

power and strength are available to us, right now. And His peace, His joy, His love, and His provision are accessible right now. And if our minds are wandering, we miss all of that.

This reminds me of another verse we've discussed before, and this is the key to "keeping our heads in the game."

*So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. 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. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:1-2 MSG*

Did you catch that? Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.

That right there is the answer. Fixing our attention on God keeps our heads in the game. And it helps us overcome this distraction of a wandering mind. Because when our thoughts are fixed on Him, they can't be fixed on anything else.

### **So, how do we do this?**

How do we fix our attention on God?

I suggest we stay in conversation with God all throughout the day, beginning in the morning, all the way to the end of each day. Because we can't fix our minds on or have a relationship with someone we never spend time with. Even if you're not in the habit of talking with God throughout your day, simply whispering something like, "God, I love You." Or "God, I know You're with me right now." Or "God, help me keep my thoughts on You in this moment." We don't have to complicate things or use fancy words. We can talk to God like we talk to a friend.

Then bringing Him into the current moment helps keep us even more present. "God, thank You for this beautiful sunrise." Or "God, you continually providing all I need. Thank you for helping me with this difficult situation." Or "God, I'm with my children and I want to stay present with them. Help me to do that for this next short while."

The more we do this, the easier it will become. And the more we fix our thoughts on God, the less our mind wandering will be. God will help keep us in the moment when we're living in the moment with Him. He will keep our thoughts right where He is. And when our thoughts are on Him, we can't help but be joyful and happy.

### **When we fix our thoughts on God, joy and peace follow.**

No matter what we're walking through. On the other hand, a wandering mind snatches that joy and peace away from us.

So, do you think you have a wandering mind? Pay attention to what you think about over the next day or so. Are you thinking about what you're doing, or is your mind elsewhere? I'll be joining you! Inviting God into our daily moments and conversing with Him throughout the day will help us stay on track.

Friend, if you found encouragement and hope in this episode, would you please consider rating it and/or reviewing from wherever you're listening today? This will help others find this encouragement too. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss a new episode.

Mind wandering doesn't stand a chance when God's invited in! Let's keep our heads in this all-important game of life. It's too important to live it distracted. Thanks for being here today. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

Episode 86, [The Distraction of a Busy Mind Says, "Think About This"](#)

James Taylor, [Wandering](#), lyrics

Harvard study, [A Wandering Mind Not a Happy Mind](#)

[Philippians 4:8](#) NLT

[Isaiah 26:3](#) NLT

[1 Peter 1:13](#) MSG

[Meaning of "Get your head in the game"](#)

[Romans 12:1-2](#) MSG

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*Julie Lefebvre*