

**State of Mind**  
***“Voices”***  
**March 10, 2019**

**Remind Me Who I Am**  
**In Christ Alone**

**Turn and Greet-Richard**

**Welcome/Offering-Shannon**

**Feature-Cool Kids**

I wish I could be like the cool kids cause the all the cool kids they seem to fit in.

That’s exactly how I felt in those formative years of my life. My middle and high school years were difficult to say the least. I wanted so much to fit in. It was very clear who fit in and who did not. I did not. On a regular basis,

I was reminded in word and deed, that I was not a fit and my presence was not welcome. Those years were full of self-loathing and pain. The voices from that time of my life affected me for years and years and sometimes, still do.

I can't even imagine what my life would have been like had social media been around! My heart goes out to all our students and young adults who are trying to find their way in a culture which now has a 24/7 image management system. Let's take a look.

## **VIDEO-INSTAGRAM**

I think that video did such a great job of illustrating what happens when we listen to the voices outside of us that tell us how we should be, what we should do and say and think and how we should act. And many of us have been those voices, not just on social

media but in real life. Anytime we say things that box people in. Things like...if you think that you must be one of **those** people, you can't possibly think **that** only close minded morons think that, you wouldn't **dare** feed your kids that if you loved them, any one who votes that way **clearly** doesn't know and love Jesus. When we say overarching statements like that IRL or on social media, we are adding to the desire to manage one's image for fear we be viewed as "bad" or as one of "those" people.

And so we all become more and more fragmented. We become more disconnected from our insides and more concerned with managing how we look on the outside.

And in doing so we become less whole. We become more fractured and we spend more time trying to make sure we appear to have it all together instead of engaging in activities

that could make us more whole, healthy and complete people.

And that was true of me, coming out of the pain of my middle and high school years, I had found a place to belong in college. I soon found a place I fit in. I became a make-it-happen kind of person and my tendency towards being a workaholic and approval addict began to really take root. See I found that if I worked hard and made stuff happen, I got approval and accolades and that would shut the voices down for a time. Those voices that said that I was unlovable and annoying and that I didn't matter.

In that season, I also met my husband. And again, not realizing it, I had this set of expectations of myself that if I just did X, Y, and Z he would have to love me, not for who I was but for what I did.

This cycle continued on and on behind the scenes. I hadn't given any thought to my thoughts or considered how this cycle might be undermining my emotional and mental health. I was becoming more and more of this image of the happy, make-it-happen person and I was certain that I had to keep it all up. I couldn't possibly let people see what was happening behind the scenes or they might leave me, disregard me and stop wanting me around. I wore a mask, an image I wanted to present to people. An image that was becoming more and more incongruent with the person underneath it.

We moved to KC 21 years ago and around that time my neediness started to show. You see before moving to KC from Springfield, I was so secure in the image I had at my previous job as a hall director at Missouri State. I was building a reputation, I had high up connections. I was proving that I was

somebody, that I was worthy of love and respect by the work I did.

Coming to KC, I wasn't known. I had to re-establish my image. I was in a new job at a new university in a much smaller department, I was in a new church, a new town, I was a fairly new mom (my oldest child, Steven, was just barely one when we moved to KC) and I had no friends outside the students I led at the university.

I became extremely clingy, depressed and anxious. I was miserable and I'm pretty sure miserable to be around.

Just under a year later, I had applied for a director of administration job at North Heartland. I thought it would be a transitional position as I sought to move off campus out of a housing job. Joke's on me...here I am 20 years later.

Anyway, in that first year at North Heartland, it became more and more clear that my insides did not match my outsides. I was just sharing with a friend the other day that my first year on staff at North Heartland, I cried more than I ever had. It became clear that the folks I worked with here were not interested in my “image” and they wanted to see the real me restored to wholeness.

For far too long, I had learned to hide the less-than-ideal side of me. I had listened to a lot of voices that said, do this, don't do that, say this, don't say that. I spent so much time in managing an image I had lost touch with who I really was.

Seeing this, my supervisor at that time, required me to start a growth process with a mentor, Associate Pastor Kitti Homan. Kitti took me on a journey of learning how to read

and apply God's word and through great books such as Dr. Henry Cloud's Changes that Heal, I learned how to begin doing what Rick talked about in week one. I learned to think about my thinking. I learned to take a look at my point of view and adjust faulty viewpoints. I learned to name the pains of my past and to grieve and to forgive. This was huge for me as I was spending a lot of time harboring unforgiveness of those who had hurt me and that unforgiveness created in me a lot of bitterness and driven-ness.

It was in this time, that I began to realize that because I was unclear about who I was and the fact that I didn't value myself, I was very susceptible to the voices outside of me. I didn't even stop to consider if they were worth listening to. I would just hear it and try to make it happen. Good moms do this...try to do that. Bad wives do this...try to avoid doing that. Good Christians do this...try to do



that. Bad employees do this...try to avoid doing that.

Through my work with Kitti and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I realized that the faulty core beliefs I had (being unloveable, unworthy, annoying, etc) were being made much, much worse by certain voices I was letting influence my thinking.

I still remember the first time Kitti explained to me that we all have voices that try and get in our head. It was a huge ah ha moment. See I just assumed the thoughts I was having were true. I never realized that I might need to check them first before just agreeing with them.

In this season, Kitti helped me to understand that the voices I needed to be listening to were the Lord's and those who pointed me to Him. I should shut down the voices that

would seek to pull me away from Jesus.

See the more I would listen to the wrong voices the more enslaved I was to my faulty core beliefs, to creating the image that I thought would get me the love I so desperately wanted and the growing fear that if people knew the “real me” they would leave me.

Through Kitti, God put me on a path that involved new habits and I can say that I saw first hand that principle of neuroplasticity at work. Do you remember that from week one? Let's watch.

## **VIDEO** Neuroplasticity

See through diligent work of reading the Bible, journaling, identifying faulty thoughts and voices that were leading me astray and processing those with someone else, I found

that I developed some new pathways. New ways of thinking, healthier ways of thinking. And just like the video showed, the new roads/pathways were become more and more and the old less and less.

So how did I get there? And what do I do these days when I sense the pull to invest in “my image” instead of the real me, the one who was created in God’s image?

Well I narrowed it down to three things that I hope will help you.

## **SLIDE**

**First-create a filtering system.**

*In Philippians 4:8 we read,*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about*

*such things.*

What things cause me to worry? What takes my mind off the things of God? What encourages me to go back to those old ways of thinking?

I struggle with anxiety and overthinking so for me, I have to say no to sites like WebMD and google searches involving medical symptoms. I do not watch the news. I take in a limited amount of information from the radio and print and trust that if it's something really big that someone in my life will alert me and then I must limit how much I'll look into it less the overthinking and anxious thoughts take over.

When I sense myself getting caught up in image management or getting self-righteous or having a lot of self-loathing, I dial way back on my social media interactions both posting

and reading. And I ramp up my time with those who want to see me made whole and grow healthier, people like my counselor and close friends who love me enough to tell me the truth.

I do what I can to set filters that keep the yuck out and the good stuff in.

So let's just take a moment to consider: What filters do you need to put on the outside to limit or quiet the voices you are taking in?

Are there other voices you need to turn up and make louder?

PAUSE

Even with the best filtering attempts, still some voices remain so the second thing I do

**SLIDE is test what remains.**

*but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 NIV*

I test it. I learned in that growth process that a voice that comes from the Lord or that is being used by the Lord, will have certain characteristics and ones that are not from God and intended to pull me away will have other characteristics.

**SLIDE** Helpful voices will:

- not contradict God or His word.
- help me to grow into a whole, more complete, healthier version of myself.
- not cause shame, condemnation and a desire to hide but instead will convict me to move towards wholeness and health.

**SLIDE** Harmful voices will:

- contradict or distort God or His word. (if God loved you, he'd...; God just wants

you to be happy so it's ok to do this thing you know is wrong)

- encourage me to protect my image or feed my ego (people will like you more if you give them what they want, people like people who do this or don't do that, if you want to be cool you have to say this or do that or vote like this)
- cause shame and a desire to hide. Destructive voices are the first to point out all our failings, to remind us of all the places we are lacking and are faking. These voices often tell us to do something and then smack us down for doing it. (you'll feel better if you just eat the donut, you are an awful person)

After I've tested what remains, I must

**SLIDE-conduct a cleaning cycle** to remove anything that is destructive and unhealthy.

## Psalm 51:10 (ESV)

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right<sup>[a]</sup> spirit within me.*

I do this by doing something very similar to what Rick encouraged us to do in the first week.

### **SLIDE**

First, I must **take every thought captive**. Those that fit the bill of destructive or unhealthy must be identified and dealt with. I follow the instructions given in 2 Corinthians 10:5:

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (NIV)*

I ask God to reveal to me the truth about the thought and whether I need to lean into it for health or pull away to avoid fragmentation



and eventual destruction.

After identifying what needs to go away, I

**SLIDE-dump the trash.** I write out the distorted voice and call it what it is and throw it away.

Once I dump the trash, I find it necessary to

**SLIDE-reset** my mind by remembering the truth.

John 8:32

*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

See having accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I am a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.

## SLIDE

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Cor. 5:17 NIV*

Through Him, I am set free, made right, made whole and called to live a different way. Once I cleanse my mind I find it so key to reaffirm the truth. So I read scriptures that point to that truth, I listen to and sing songs that remind of me of the truth.

But sometimes we need help with this process. If you are unable to discern if the voices are for good or for evil, reach out to a trusted counselor or friend. Sometimes the voices are so cleverly disguised you take in something that sounds like God. After all, as it says in 2 Corinthians,

## SLIDE

*...for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. (2 Cor. 11:14-15 NIV)*

About seven years ago I started seeing a counselor again after I came to realize I was burning out. Through our conversations, I realized I had been giving credence to some voices that said, Good Christians and Good pastors do these things and in doing them I was violating some key principles like the fact that I am a finite human being. I am limited. I can't be all things to all people. I am not the savior of the human race. But those voices seemed so very real that I had become distorted in my thinking and was living in a way that was not healthy and not God's design for my life. Those voices had to be called what they were and tossed out in the garbage. And in fact, have to keep taking them out along with several others!

Similarly I have had seasons, where God was wanting to grow me or restore wholeness to some area of my life and I almost missed it because I was too caught up in maintaining my image. I can think of times where I was so busy trying to prove myself I almost missed the chance to be healed. Someone who loved me was trying to point out a place in me that needed attention and I was not wanting to hear it. See voices that sound nice aren't always good for us and voices that are hard to hear aren't always necessarily bad for us.

We see an example of this in Galatians chapter 2, here Paul tells us that he had to confront Peter who seemed to be a bit more concerned about image management with his fellow Jews than he should have been.

## **SLIDE**

*I opposed him to his face, because he stood*

*condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. Galatians 2: 11-13 NIV*

Paul loved Peter and his heart for the church. He loved him too much not to call him on his stuff.

Again it comes back to the intent of the voice. Is the intent to draw us closer to God and to make us whole? Is it pushing towards a desire to admit we need to grow or heal, a conviction that we aren't where we need to be in some area of our life. If so, it may be hard to heart but we need to take it in.

## **SLIDE**

Proverbs 27:6 says

*Wounds from a sincere friend*

*are better than many kisses from an enemy.*

*NLT*

If the intent is to push us into hiding, away from God and others, pushing us to maintain an image and to cover up our weaknesses then we need to shut it down.

We know from what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 that He's not a fan of image management.

## **SLIDE**

*You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Matthew 23: 27-28 (NIV)*

He wants us to be a whole, complete, healed and restored person **not** a fake persona.

So if you are unsure if a voice is for or against you, whether the voice has your best interest and growth at heart or whether it wants to pull you into a false existence, maybe get the help from a trusted advisor.

For the time we have remaining today, I want to take some time to walk through this process.

I want to invite you to take some time and consider the voices you have been listening to. Are there voices that are wreaking havoc in your life? Are there lies you have allowed to take root in your mind and heart that need to die and go away? Voices that are encouraging you to drive those old roads of faulty thinking?

This morning you hopefully received a piece of black paper on your way in. If not, there are some at the tables in the center and up

here at the front. We are going to take some time to write out those voices that are destroying our insides and then I want to invite you to come up here and throw them where they belong...in the trash!

When you come up to throw them away there are white cards near the trash can that I invite you to pick up. The cards are double sided. One side has some truths about who we are In Christ and the other side has some lyrics of a song we will sing together at the end of the service.

Now I know that not everyone in the room or watching are “in Christ”.

What does it mean to be “In Christ”?

To be in Christ means that at some point, we got to a place where we came to realize that we were never going to measure up. Try as



we might we could not close the gap between the good and bad in us and so we came to realize that we don't have to close that gap because Jesus of Nazareth offered to do it for us. He is the son of the living God and through His death on the cross He made a way for us to be made right. He makes up the difference that we can't and so in Him we are free to be loved just as we are and yet encouraged to be more than we ever thought. In Him, we are a new creation.

So if you aren't there yet, you are welcome to pick up the card as a way to understand what being in Christ means and what He offers to those who chose to make Him their Savior and Leader.

Let's pray:

Pray for those who know Jesus, those who want to know Jesus and those who are still seeking Him.

Now let's take a moment to write out the voices that need to be trashed.

Richard plays quietly for about 30 seconds.

As you feel led, come up and throw those things away and take up the identity that comes In Christ.

## **Feature-You Say**

**Response during song (may need to noodle a bit if people are taking longer)**

At this time, I want to invite you to read along with me the statements that are printed on the card. They are on the screens as well.

### **SLIDE**

In Christ...:

I am not condemned.

I can never be separated from the love of God.

I am a new creation.

I am a child of God.

## **SLIDE**

I have been forgiven.

I am chosen.

I have been brought near to God.

I can approach God with freedom and confidence.

## **SLIDE**

I am rooted and built up in the Lord.

I am under His grace.

I am transformed.

When we say yes to what Jesus offers, we are in Him and those things, and more, are true of us.

At this time, I want to ask you to please stand and sing this last song as a declaration of what is true. Let these words wash over you.

### **Who You Say I Am-Band**

I am, we are-who HE says we are. I want to challenge you to take each day from now until Easter Sunday to read that card, listen to that song and repeat those words each day, as often as needed to use the principle of neuroplasticity to develop, renew or strengthen your mind to be reminded of what is true for those who are In Christ Jesus.

Let me say a blessing over you...

May you have wisdom to know what voices to keep and what to kill.

### **Closing comments-Shannon**

## **Just two quick things...**

New series beginning next Sunday

Students at the door to collect pocket change  
for Something to Eat