

Greg Nettle: Hey friends, I'm Greg Nettle the host of the church planting podcast. I have the privilege of serving as president of Stadia, church planting, where we help you start thriving, multiplying, growing churches for the next generation. I am really excited about today's guest Mindy Caliguire. She's a close personal friend. She serves on the board of Stadia and she's a church planter. Mindy planted a church in Boston years ago. And out of that became passionate about the need for soul care for church planters and leaders in every space. Would you welcome Mindy Caliguire?

New Speaker: So I'm here with my dear dear friend, Mindy Caliguire. Mindy has been a friend for a long time, but she also serves on the Stadia board as well as a mentor to me in the area of soul care and many other things. And so Mindy, I'm just absolutely delighted to have you on this episode of the Church Planting Podcast.

Mindy Caliguire: Oh, Greg. It was an easy, yes. I'm delighted to be here with you. Love what, what Stadia's doing, what all the people listening are doing. This is really important.

Greg Nettle: Okay. So Mindy so here, I mean, it's kind of become a buzz a little bit now. A lot of people talking about it what's the tick in it? Why has it become such kind of a household?

Mindy Caliguire: Oh my gosh. I, so, you know, I've been dealing with these themes for over 20 years. So I first got the URL of soulcare.com in 1998, like the internet was just born.

Greg Nettle: Smart move.

Mindy Caliguire: Smart. I know. Well, I, I just knew smart people and I trusted them and they told me you should go do that. And I said, okay. And so, yeah, I do have a, a longer term perspective on how this theme has been prioritized or not. And I would say for many years, I felt like this was, I mean, at best something that people would think about if they had nothing better to do with their time, which for leaders never happened. And a lot of my work was trying to help leaders get at a visceral level, why this is so important to their life, but it was still hard, I'll say. And to tell you like the, the difference in the uptick a couple data points. One is I had started the year 2020 with two speaking engagements, booked, which was pretty normal when it's not my vocation to be out there doing speaking. I just take opportunities when they would come. And I calculated by the end of that year, I had been in front of a group, a podcast, a webinar, a speaking engagement, I have virtual staff meetings, the whole thing 45 times in those nine months,

Greg Nettle: 45 times, which means you need more, you need more soul care personally.

Mindy Caliguire: Well the good thing is that this is, this has been my way of life, Greg. This is when, when you live this way, the good news is God can sustain us and we can

avoid the ruts, which I knew all too well of drivenness and anxiety and, and just pushing and crushing your own soul. So I, I did need it myself. But this, it wasn't like a new Herculean thing. It's like, no, I, this is what I know to do is when life is this, how you live when life is crazy and life is always crazy, right? There's always a thing and learning how to rest your soul in God when things are crazy has been one of the biggest gifts of, of my own souls collapse and the many years, since another data point, I'll tell you this, because I couldn't wait to tell you this story.

New Speaker: So there's a church relatively local to me here in Colorado, who the pastor started thinking, I wanna start helping people have a soul care plan. I've been making assumptions about their life with God, and they've been making assumptions about me, and I don't wanna do that anymore. I wanna be intentional and I can't make them care for their soul, but I could make them have a soul care plan. Anyway. So these were the things he was thinking about. He literally Googled SoulCare so finds the soul care website, realizes I'm up in Boulder, realizes we know people in common and starts like just sort of exploring a relationship that has resulted in two key dates and things. And I'll just tell you, this is the uptick, because this is so dramatically different than anything I've ever encountered before. The week of Christmas, he and his executive team did a full day of silent retreat with me.

New Speaker: He hadn't even written his Christmas message yet. And they were there and present Greg. They were there and present. And the goal of our team, it was not just me, our team. It wasn't only silence. It was walking them through a series of reflection, exercises and visioning and whatever about the year ahead to result in a soul care plan. That was step one of our engagement with them. Step two was to do a follow on retreat for their full staff so that we can walk their full staff. This is a 4,000 some odd church, right? Yeah. They're not small, got a big staff, beautiful facility. Unbelievable. And we did a full, like four hour staff retreat on January 4th. Wow. Second, probably first business day of the new year, second day.

Greg Nettle: So this is fascinating to me, cuz my hunch would be that he probably preached the best Christmas message he ever preached and their staff is getting off to the best year that they're gonna ever have. Um, that's the, you know, counterintuitive part right.

Mindy Caliguire: For you to even say that tells me, you know, now you've experience this. Do you know? Yeah. That it's counterintuitive and yet it puts the, like you think about what you're putting your weight on, your confidence on, when you put your confidence on God. And even if we have lots of good human strengths, when we put our confidence on the Lord and that is hard to rearrange our wiring, the flow of the spirits activity is amazing.

Greg Nettle: Okay. So Mindy we're coming out, God willing, we're coming out of the pandemic, moving maybe into endemic stage, hopefully, you know? What are you seeing in pastors that you're dealing with? What, what are they, what's the

common struggles? I, a lot of our listeners, I think a lot of times we're not even aware of that. We're going through things until somebody else says, oh yeah, that's, that's what I'm sensing and feeling.

Mindy Caliguire: Yeah. I was with a group yesterday, virtually that are all up across Canada and naming like three big ideas that I was naming at the beginning of our time together. And one is just naming the lack of margin. We just don't have much margin right now. And you know, I'm in Boulder, Colorado area, you, we were talking before this call about the, the wildfires and the devastation in the community. Greg, we used the term burned out all the time, right? We talk about burned out. Leaders burned out. Now I gotta tell you, when you are looking at a former three, two story home with fancy cars in the front and you are looking at a pile of ashes, you can't even see a refrigerator. You can't see a bathtub. You can't see a toilet. There are no couches. This is ash, nothing left and harrowing. And, and yet I I'm staring at it going, this is what burned out is.

Greg Nettle: There's nothing. Well, and none of us want, I, I, as leaders, none of us want our lives reduced to ashes, right?

Mindy Caliguire: No, no. And by God's grace is thankfully true in my own life. True in seasons of yours. That is never the end of the story. Even at times when we feel like we're looking at pile of ashes, because out of the ashes, hope will arise and God does create beauty out of ashes. And I'm seeing it in real time here, but I've just never had such a powerful visual image of when there is, is no more strength. There is no more resource. There is no more left. And so anyway, with these leaders yesterday just highlighting the lack of margin, the, the pandemic has just people are exhausted, especially anyone in a caregiving role. So pastors in particular, but medical professionals, teachers past police, like everybody's been on high alert, everybody's central nervous systems, even from a physiological standpoint, we've just been on high alert for years now.

Mindy Caliguire: And then, so that is the whole lack of emotional relational margin, spiritual margin for many. But if you add like a whole other category is all the division and strife that has marked our country anyway. And many of those in the church have struggled. I mean, I've talked to you as well. Pastors who've said, I, I can't say anything. Right. And then if I try to not say anything, then I'm in trouble for not saying anything it's even worse too. Right. And it's, it's just like, they, they mean, well, they don't, you know, and, and then they're also struggling with a, I, I thought we were about something bigger than this people. And they're realizing that their congregations have been disciplined by Fox news or CNN doesn't really matter which side they're on. They, they are not, they are, they are, they're feeling the failure of the imagination of the reality of the kingdom as they watch their own people and, and really are on the painful end of their people's criticism. And, and anyway, so there's like that whole category, there's like no margin, the deep disappointment and sadness and anger and vitriol that, that we've just seen. And then there, I would've to look up my notes. I don't remember, but there was a third whole category. But back to your

question, I think it is like vital for all leaders to just kind of pause and take, take a little inventory. Like, am I doing, how, how am I, how is my soul? Because,

Greg Nettle: Okay. So let, I, I, gosh, there's so much to unpack here. So Mindy, I just know as a church leader, a church planter who's in the midst and, and our, you know, our I'm so proud of all the, all of you church planters out there. And I'm why watching you launch in the midst of what Mindy's just described and you're entrepreneurial and you are, you are, you have deep, deep faith. And and yet in so many I'm going, how do they take inventory? I mean, you know, I I'd like to be able to say, yeah, I know how to take inventory. I'll go in and sit in my chair and lighting candle, but right. But I'm going if, I mean, if I'm like church fighters or anything like me, I'm going, yeah, that sounds good. But how do I actually do that? Yeah. Yeah.

Mindy Caliguire: There's lots of good ways you can, if you're willing. And if you, I would urge that at some point, January is such a good time to do that. We just did a semi silent retreat that had a whole worksheet. People can download if they want that guide you through an inventorying process. But minimally to just sit down in a nonjudgmental, open pages of a journal and just start saying, even prayerfully God, what is going on inside my head right now? What, what is really going on in my heart? What are the emotions that, what, what are some things I need to lament that I'm just sad about, that I'm angry about that I'm frustrated about what are things that coexist that are I'm grateful for, but like, just to start naming the interior reality is a really important thing because many of us we're just so good at functioning on the sort of on the outer outer zone, the public stuff, we just make stuff happen. And we get going and going and to pause and reflect is, is one of the most important Bri rituals routines for your leadership period. But particularly right now,

Greg Nettle: Okay. Now Mindy, this doesn't have to be like I, I, I know listening to you. Okay. you can take a four hour block. You can take a full day, you can take three days, but the reality is a lot of times this doesn't need to take four hours. This could be me setting aside one hour, right. With my journal and just asking some, okay, on a scale of one to 10, how am I, you know, yeah. One of the other spiritually, my marriage, my kids,

Mindy Caliguire: You know, one of the other sort of constructs for an evaluation or a self evaluation is to think through the different dimensions, flourishing that Barna glue the human flourishing project at Harvard, they've identified five different areas and this soul care plan walked those pastors and leaders through this. And those five areas are deeply research based and shocker. They very much align with how we stand God to have created the world. But those five areas are one is your spiritual connection, right? Your spiritual groundedness. How is that going? Second is your relational connections, like, are your relationships as satisfying as you desire? And what are, what are those layers of support relationally for you? Third dimension is all of around health physical health, but that very naturally connects to the concepts of mental health, right? Mental

health and physical health. Both of those sort of live in your, in your body and are separate from one another, but very related.

Mindy Caliguire: So assessing how, how is your health? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you getting the right food? Are you getting movement? Are you, you know, struggling with depression or any other anxiety order disorders, like, like let's start talking about it. So anyway spiritual, relational health, physical, and mental health, but the other two that are really interesting coming outta the research and guys as church planners, this is vital for us to be aware of. One is vocational, how are you doing with your sense of vocation guys? That is such a big part of how we make meaning in our lives is our sense of purpose. Our sense of calling and many of us in ministry have a deep alignment of our vocational track and who, who God's made us to be. But it, that is a, that is a driver of the experience of flourishing, of, of human, like Shalom. You could, and,

Greg Nettle: And, and in light of what you've already shared with, if the division and disappointment, that's an area that could really be approaching burnout.

Mindy Caliguire: Yes. Yes. Because I'm so called to this. And my hope for my people is not being met. So where is that? You know? Okay. So that's a great call out Greg, the, the last one, and this is the one that for church planters, I speak from my own experience when we were church planning in Boston, the last one is financial and guys, a lot of times in ministry, we don't talk about the weight of financial pressures because it maybe doesn't sound very spiritual, or it seems like we have a not faith or something. And and the interesting thing in the flourishing project, the data, what it showed is not that we struggle it wasn't, it's not measuring how much you have. It's a sense of, are you, are you, well, are you whole, do you have enough? And you know, everybody there's questions where, you know, multimillionaires are one, if they have enough. So the, the, the question of enough is always a bit re but getting at our sense of contentment or not, and, and not even just discontent, but, so I'll just say, from my perspective, when we, we were church planting for 10 years in Boston, there was only one time in those 10 years, Greg, when we could see more than two months out in terms of knowing we could pay our mortgage.

Greg Nettle: And so you're constantly feeling that stress and constantly tension constant, and boy, that is the world. Most church planners we love in. Oh,

Mindy Caliguire: I know. I know. And, and just to, you know, sometimes that I reality isn't gonna change right away, but to name it, to go, man, I am exhausted of always not knowing if we can pay for our groceries, if we can, if I'm gonna, as it happened to me, you know, you go to the checkout line, you've got a hundred dollars worth of groceries in your thing. You go to pay. And all of a sudden, not only did you not have money on that card, but you're like safety, whatever, whatever they call that overdraft had bottomed out. And I didn't even know it. And it was so much shame, embarrassment, like you're just trying to do God's work. Right. But it just, Ugh. So anyway, those five areas gives you another sort of a, a, a construct to think about.

Greg Nettle: Okay. So I think, I think that's a great tool right now to just stop and pause a moment and say, okay, if you're listening, write those down, spiritual, relational health vocational, and find financial. And then that's your starting point in prayer, you know, get in a comfortable place and, and just start asking the questions with God and saying, how am I doing maybe with a trusted friend, right. Mindy, maybe your spouse, maybe another friend, and say, how do you perceive me as doing the, in this area? To get some insight from out outside.

Mindy Caliguire: Yeah. Both vital to connect with someone else as possible. Like that's what we're doing with this church is we're following up with them with spiritual direction and coaching appointments to try to create that space for them to process and metabolize what they're learning. And then also the five areas give a good to begin imagining with God, not like some self-guided, you know, self-improvement project, how is God guiding? But what is one or two things you might anchor into your 2022 rhythms to stimulate health in those areas probably pick one or two that seem most keen.

Greg Nettle: Okay. Okay. Let's talk about this, cuz again, I, I love the pragmatic side and of how you've helped me in my personal life with this. So let's just pick out relational and let's just go, boy, I feel really disconnected. I feel like, you know, with, with the pandemic and I I've let some relat some deep friendships go, I'm not getting enough, you know, life giving relationships in my life. So in 2022, I commit to X, right? Give, give us some like real practical, just a couple things.

Mindy Caliguire: Jeff and I have been benefited over the last six months where he just was like, all right, we're, we're gonna like, no matter how crazy schedules are, no matter how crazy we're gonna do one connect a week, date night, whatever you wanna call it for the two of you. Okay. Which most couples do that all the time or at least

Greg Nettle: I'm so sure. But

Mindy Caliguire: Yeah, we were the ones that were the delinquents. We just like, you know, kids and work and this and that. And I will say he just texted me to cuz we're displaced right now because of the fires. We are like morning, noon, and night helping out our neighborhood peers, et cetera, et cetera. And and the joke is when I evacuated our house, Greg, like, you're like, okay, grab the passports, grab this. Like you don't know if anything's gonna be still standing. Right. And I grabbed four pair of boots. It's like, what? You just aren't thinking straight. Right? Like I got passports, I got some other stuff. And somehow I thought I needed four pair of boots and a bunch of underwear and nothing else. It was ridiculous. And so he's over at the house right now and I gave him a list of things he needed to pick up. And he texted me just before this call and said date this week, boots, girl.

Greg Nettle: Ah, that's good. That's good.

Mindy Caliguire:

And it's like, I don't know how we're gonna do a date. It doesn't matter. It's like he just, he has been such a blessing to me personally that every week relentlessly, okay, what night is it this week? Which time is it? This time? It's never the same. It's always different. Cuz our calendars are nutty that way. It's probably most of you all's are. So that's one. Another is recognizing that through our connection with people is one of the ways that God meets us. It is not just cool to hang out with your friends. There is a very below the level of even awareness. There is a Larry Krab used to call it connecting. When we connect at a level below words, something is being transmitted between us right now, Jim Wilder and others are helping us understand how the brain processes and experiences relationships. And that's what, that's how we encounter joy. That's that's how joy co shows up in our lives is the look, you know, when you and I got on the call today and it's like our faces light up when we see each other, that is what triggers joy in the brain when they do brain scans and stuff like that. When people's joy center lights up, it's when somebody they know sees them and their face lights up, you gotta, okay, let me whose

Greg Nettle:

Face is like, okay. So let me give a real practical thing that has worked for me that, you know, some of these planners and church leaders could, could look at. So when I look at my calendar and I'm typically looking at it you know, not, we obviously have our year calendars and stuff, but if I'm looking two weeks out, I, I will literally each week look at my calendar and ask myself, do I have five, five life giving relational connections this week on my calendar? Now this is critical because they have to be life giving. So it, it can't count as someone that I'm mentoring that I'm gonna go walk in the park and disciple. It, you know, it can't count as someone that you wants to meet with me because they want to talk about their marriage. These have to be people that, that when I'm with them, I walk away going, wow, that was so good to just be with Mindy and be Greg nettle in all of my foibles and everything we are and, and to make, and I need to stay flourishing.

Greg Nettle:

I need five of those a week. Great. On my calendar. And so just real practical listeners, you can, you know, kind of look for things like that. Hey, Mindy. Gosh, I, I just, I don't wanna leave today without talking about something that you were part of with me and the stadia board. Just a year ago, I, I came into the stadia December board meeting and we were all in person and, and you and west Stafford were there in west Stafford, such a dear mentor, friend of mine you know, president of compassion international for 25 years, but I'll never forget. I, I sat down at the end in our executives and had my, my goals for the year. And and I'll never forget Steve Porter our board chair saying, you know, Greg man, you, you know what, and this is Steve's opinion.

Greg Nettle:

So we'll take it with a grain of salt. He said, you're a great leader. You know, we we would a great, we fully, well, thank you. But we, we fully expect you to one, either hit these goals or two come back and tell us, you know, the pan pandemic hit. And here's why we didn't hit these. Right. And, and so we're, we, those are valid and, and we're concerned about those, but what we're really concerned about that we're not seeing on this sheet is your personal life goals and, and you

and Wes, so graciously met with me for the next several months, once a month, helping me do exactly what we're talking about here. We walked through all five of those areas and said, Greg, what's your plan in for the coming year and, and Mindy here's, here's why I wanted to bring that up because that, for me, I can't tell you the benefit that was to me and my family at a personal level.

Greg Nettle: But, but here's what I told that story to our stadia executive team and shared it with our full staff. And, and I'll tell you the, the confidence that gave our entire staff in our board and in my leadership was incredible. And so church planners, I guess what I would say to you make sure that, you know, get your board to listen to this part of the podcast so that they're, they're not just looking at, did you hit your numbers? Are you financial, sustainable with the church? You know, all of those things, but let's talk about your personal goals. Okay. So Mindy, yeah. Speak into that a little bit, because that came outta you and you know, kind of driving, if it

Mindy Caliguire: Gets back to that what did you, what was the word you used counterintuitive reality about the priority of the soul guys, whether you like it or not, whether you know it or not, your soul's wellbeing is driving everything that matters to you, your leadership, your teaching, your mentoring, your relationships, your fundraising, all of those things, super important. They're all really valid and needful in our world. Every single one of those will rise and fall, as it relates to how your soul is doing way behind the scenes way, just you and God. And there are very practical things you can do to, to, to reconnect, to stay grounded, to live out of a place of soul health. And when, and as you do all those other things you care about, first of all, they'll probably go in a better direction. But even if they don't, you have the, you have the ability, you have the resilience, you have the perspective of your life deeply grounded in God. That's gonna allow you to navigate whatever the circumstances may bring. I think if we go back to that point in time, I think you, I would say you conceptually agreed with all that. But then as we started getting into like, well, what I don't wanna overspeak Greg, that it would is a little bit

Greg Nettle: Like, you're good. Keep going.

Mindy Caliguire: You be silent and do nothing like

Greg Nettle: I'm authentic. Yeah. It was hilarious. You, you want me to sit silently for how long? Every day? Yep.

Mindy Caliguire: Yep. I know it's so counterintuitive, Greg. It just, it, it took me so long to unlearn my mental habits from the past and to find new ways of opening to God in real time, everybody who's listening has got great truths about God, great conviction. They're willing to work hard and leap small buildings or tall buildings in a single bound, but learning how to let your soul rest in God's presence and receive from God. I mean, that's, those are very uncomfortable things for most of us to learn, but we can, and I would believe that we must one interesting data point, Greg is while I had those leaders we were up in the dream, she on



the property at the time on that day retreat, I also, because I was, had been serving on the, as chair of the board of our church.

Mindy Caliguire: I was on a distribution list from the ECFA that went out to all board chairs and pastors that they had emails for senior pastors and board chairs. And Greg, it was a series of questions about the sole care plans of your senior leaders and what might the ECFA be doing based on what they have heard. And this is, I knew I had heard through some people that they were looking into. How could we similarly, like, they're the ones that credentialize that you, you know, how to handle money in a way that doesn't credit the name of Jesus they have for about two years now or longer behind the scenes. This was the first out in, out public that I saw Ben saying, how do we also create systems of care and health around leaders? And how do we start talking about it, measuring it, insisting on it, because we need to guard and protect the reputation of Jesus and the church because what's happening when leaders burn out and then when you're burned out, you do all manner of really stupid things.

Mindy Caliguire: We all do. It's not like, yes, we do. It's not, it's, it's not rocket science. That's just, what's gonna happen. And I, I don't like it when people are like, oh, can you believe that leader did blah, blah, blah. And it's like, well, gimme a freaking break. Of course they are, look what people have been expecting. Look what our systems have created as an unsustainable on now, still each person has culpability for their choices. There's no way around that. But I, I look at it from a systems standpoint and I'm like, what is gonna change the system? What is gonna change the untenable unworkable job descriptions that we have for leaders. And then we put 'em up on idols and, and then shock ourselves when they crash. And they have no pub, no inner life, because they're so busy leading the public life that we demand.

Mindy Caliguire: Anyway, again does not diminish public. What do you call it? Personal culpability and respons. No. Agreed. Yeah, but there are systemic issues that are far beyond it. So to see that coming out from E C FA and I can show you, I mean, some of the questions are like, does your senior pastor have a so care plan? Yes or no? Or I don't know. No other options. Oh, we're thinking about it. Oh, we thought it would be a good idea. Yes, no. Or I don't know. Does your senior leader have a plan for their staff? Yes. No. Or I don't know is one of your board members meeting with your senior pastor on a regular basis to make sure that they are caring for their soul basically.

Greg Nettle: Wow.

Mindy Caliguire: Yes. No. Unbelievable. Greg. And I'm like the world, this is about the momentum changing. This is about, yeah, yeah. Enough people going, we're not we're we're, we've had it, we've had it with these unsustainable, never biblical ideals of leadership. That, that, that day, I hope we have a deep enduring refusal. The days are gone.

Greg Nettle: Okay. And so planters and leaders out there, you know, sometimes it's hard to go to your board and say, Hey, I need you to care for me. We, you know, it feels wimpy and all that, but this is a podcast you could, or podcast, you could have them watch it, you know, as a, a group together or listen to it and then come 'em and discuss it. And it's an easy way to have someone from the outside actually speak into your leadership or management team. If your board isn't fully formed yet. Mindy let's wrap up with this. So somebody's out there right now and they they're listening. They're going, oh my gosh. I'm not doing very well in those five areas. Definitely not flourishing. How do they get, I mean, they could go, go Google SoulCare, but you know, I I've, I've been engaged with one of your spiritual directors. You know, I've had the benefit of a personal relationship with you. I'm looking forward now, cuz I'm going, you know what? I don't think I have a very good staff plan for SoulCare. And in talking with you about that, how can people engage with your organization?

Mindy Caliguire: Yeah. guys, we would love to serve you head over to soulcare.com. We have a mailing list. That's how that is our first way of letting you know about stuff. That's coming up. We have some digital online courses. We have a digital closed community. We're really not trying to enter the fray in, in Facebook and Instagram necessarily other than to draw people towards this. We call it the sole care collective where we're doing online courses, groups. We're starting up one for pastors wives in the next number of weeks and months. Cuz man, there's a whole group of people that often are not seen or cared for. So anyway, we're, we're, we're listening to people, we're doing a listening tour to try to understand what the needs are in organizations, large and small. And and those spiritual directors and coaches we've got 'em all over the country.

Mindy Caliguire: The they all work virtually. We may have a new one in Canada as well. We are and they all get it. The thing that's unique to our team is that they all have had seats or still hold seats of significant ministry responsibility. And though they're not there to be a mentor per se at all. Yeah. I just think it's important for you to know that they can hold space for you with God. Yeah. With the good, the bad and the ugly, whatever you're dealing with. And obviously it's all confidential. It's all, you know, it, we just wanna create spaces for you to be you and see out helping your soul get to a healthier place.

Greg Nettle: So soulcare.com. Don't you know, don't let that go by Mindy. It's always a pleasure. Thank you so much for

Mindy Caliguire: Joining us, Greg. God speed.