

Centering Prayer

Contemplation is the laying aside of thoughts and opening to God beyond all thought and emotion. We do not resist thoughts or suppress them. We accept them as they are and go beyond them, not by effort, but by letting them all go by. We open our awareness to the Mystery of God whom we trust is one with us. We do not try to feel anything, reflect about anything, or judge anything. We sink into the ever-present Mystery, letting everything else go. No thinking. No reflecting. No judgment. Rest. Be quiet. Be still. Be silent. Sink into the Mystery.

Matthew 6:6: But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

For Jesus prayer is sinking into silence: entering the inner room—silence of noise, closing the door—silence of thinking, and praying to Abba in secret—silence of self, the Silence of God.

Centering Prayer is a way to implement Jesus' teaching on secret prayer. It is communing with God beyond all thinking. Using a sacred word, we consent to God who dwells in our center. Whenever we become aware of thoughts, we simply and gently return to the word.

The Guidelines of Centering Prayer

Guideline 1 – Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

Guideline 2 – Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

Guideline 3 – When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

Guideline 4 – At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes close for a couple of minutes.

Resist no thought, retain no thought, react emotionally to no thought, and when engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. Simply remain in silence, disregarding all thoughts, and resting in God in pure faith. Just let God love you. The minimum time for this prayer is 20 minutes. Two (2) periods are recommended each day, one in the morning and the other in afternoon or early evening.

YHWH Breath Prayer

YHWH is pronounced in Hebrew in such a way that one does not close one's lips or move one's tongue. It is simply breathing: breathing in, "YAH," breathing out, "WEH." So, to practice, breathe in and breathe out. When you breathe in, gently say, "YAH" in your mind. When you breathe out, gently say, "WEH" in your mind. Eventually, you may not even need to think "Yahweh" in your mind. You can just breathe and rest in God effortlessly and beyond thinking.

Lectio Divina

Slowly read a scripture passage 4 times with silence in between. In the silence do the following:

After 1st Reading: Reading the Word of God: The Word of God is read in a listening manner with “the ear of one’s heart.” One is attentive to the phrase, sentence or one word that is noticed.

After 2nd Reading: Reflecting on the Word of God: The Word of God is reflected upon and the phrase that captures one’s attention that touches one is savored and held reflectively.

After 3rd Reading: Responding to the Word of God: The Word of God is responded to in a spontaneous manner. One may express a prayer, a concern, a question.

After 4th Reading: Resting with the Word of God: The Word of God is rested with in silence. Allow it to speak in the quiet of one’s heart.

The Psalms

Slowly, gently, attentively recite a Psalm, pause for a time of interior silence when you are moved, then return to the Psalm. Do as often as there is an attraction to inner silence.

Christian Meditation

This is a practice of meditation that involves repeating the word “**maranatha**” within one’s mind over and over and over. ***Interiorly repeat the word continuously for at least 20 minutes.***

The Jesus Prayer

This is the slow and deliberate recitation of the phrase “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” One can recite this in silence for an extended period of time in the morning and/or evening, but one can also recite this prayer while going about the day’s business. Moreover, the prayer can be shortened. Some variations: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” “Jesus, mercy.”

Ceaseless Prayer

The goal of the Christian life is oneness with God, ceaseless prayer. Jesus teaches this in Luke 18:1: “**Pray always without becoming weary**” and Paul echoes Jesus in 1 Thess.5:17: “**Pray without ceasing.**” Here, then, is a simple contemplative practice for ceaseless prayer:

- *Throughout the day, return ever-so-gently to a sacred word.*
- *Throughout the day, let your breathing return you to God.*

An effortless way of practicing ceaseless prayer is to allow silence within all through the day. Just silence. Just interior nothingness, relaxed and at rest in the divine mystery.

Enjoy the Silence.