

Centering Prayer (Contemplative Prayer)

What?

Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of Contemplative Prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. It is an attempt to present the teaching of earlier times in an updated form. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer: rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning on them. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him.

How?

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
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.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

*Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections

Tips:

I found myself really needing to focus to have Centering Prayer work for me. The key is just finding something you really want to think about, find the best single word to visualize and understand this thing, and focus on it. Find a quiet, not too brightly light place and just let your mind run wild. If it goes too far, bring that word back into your mind to re-focus. I tried this before some of my soccer games this season and the results were awesome.

Origin:

Centering Prayer is based on the wisdom saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

"...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." Matthew 6.6 (New American Bible)

It is also inspired by writings of major contributors to the Christian contemplative heritage including John Cassian, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton.