



PRACTICES *Centering Prayer*

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

Put as succinctly as possible, Centering Prayer is about receiving the gift of the close presence of God. The practice is not necessarily easy, but it is simple. Find a place that is quiet and comfortable where you can sit in God’s presence. There is no agenda to Centering Prayer other than being still and knowing that the Lord is God.

In Exodus, in order that the people would “know that the Lord is God,” the Lord sent many signs, wonders, and mighty acts of judgment. We have seen God’s work in our lives and in history, and we should not need such elaborate measures to awaken us to the Lord’s presence. Let Centering Prayer remind you of God’s abiding presence.

Four Components to consider incorporating in Centering Prayer

Component 1: Choose Bookends for Your Prayer

- Begin with a simple prayer, such as the Jesus Creed—“Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- End with the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

Component 2: Choose a Sacred Word

- Choose a “sacred word” to center you and draw your attention back to prayer
- Choose a 1-2 syllable word that is spiritually significant: Christ, Spirit, Father, Abba, grace, peace, love, presence, hope, amen, mercy...

Component 3: Return to God's Presence

- When distracted, use your sacred word to return your attention to God's presence
- Keep a paper and pencil handy if necessary. If there is a specific to-do item that won't leave you alone, simply jot a note (even with your eyes closed!) so the reminder is on the paper and out of your mind
- Don't feel bad about getting distracted! Simply use your sacred word to gently return to God's presence

Component 4: Final Details

- Sit with good posture on a chair or the floor
- Decide how long you'd like to pray, and set a timer for that duration. Try not to use an abrasive noise for your timer. The general wisdom for the optimal duration for centering prayer is 20 minutes, but don't start there! Start with just a few minutes, and as your practice becomes more consistent, add time to your practice

You can practice Centering Prayer once a week or twice a day—for 2 minutes at a time or 20—as long as it's helping you connect with God and deepening your relationship with Christ, it can be a valuable piece of your spiritual life.