



Centering Prayer

The Practice of Centering Prayer

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your willingness to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce your 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. (*the prayer period is completely up to you to decide. To begin, start with whatever time period seems right to you.)

*There is no way to do this incorrectly...
just the intention of spending quiet time with God is pleasing to God.
Relax and enjoy the time of silence with God.
Remember you are resting in the embrace of God.*

Some additional thoughts about Centering Prayer:

- Centering Prayer is consenting to the presence and action of God.
- It is a deep, open availability to God's presence
- The actual work of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and in doing so letting go of the present moment with its psychological content.
- In Centering Prayer we are developing the capacity to wait upon God with loving attentiveness
- A thought is anything that brings your attention to a focal point.
- Centering Prayer is about a *pathway of return*; return to the simple, open-ended awareness of the Divine.
- Centering Prayer is done not with attention but with *intention – to be totally open to God.*
- In Centering Prayer, this release of thought is normally accomplished with a *sacred word*. It is recommended it be a one syllable word, ie, love, God, Christ, joy.
- In Centering Prayer the goal is to keep the body comfortable and *relaxed but alert*. Close your eyes. Offer a brief prayer to collect yourself.

- *Centering Prayer begins when you start to ‘say’ your sacred word, offering it silently, gently, and at first steadily as a symbol of **your willingness to consent to the presence and action of God** during this prayer time.*
- When you are not longer attracted to thinking, you will find that you will stop saying the sacred word.
- The standard time prescription for establishing Centering Prayer practice is **20 minutes, twice a day.**
- **The Four Rs:**
 - **Resist no thought.**
 - **Retain no thought.**
 - **React to no thought.**
 - **Return ever so gently to the sacred word.**

The method of Centering Prayer consists in learning to withdraw attention from our thoughts – those incessant creations of our busy minds – in order to rest in *gentle, open attentiveness to divine reality itself*. This gentle releasing of thoughts is known in Centering Prayer teaching as *“consenting to the presence and action of God.”*

From ‘The Heart of Centering Prayer’
by Cynthia Bourgeault