

follow Prayer: Jesus Centering Prayer

Introduction to Jesus Centering Prayer

Welcome to this session on *Centering Prayer*, a practice of contemplative prayer focused on simply being with God. This handout provides key points, scriptures, quotes, and guidance to help you engage with this practice.

What is Jesus Centering Prayer?

Centering Prayer is a contemplative practice rooted in Christian tradition, designed to foster a deep, wordless connection with God. It emphasizes resting in God's presence without agenda, focusing on simply being with Him. Unlike other forms of prayer that involve speaking, studying, or requesting, Jesus Centering Prayer is about opening your heart to God's love and presence, allowing Him to work within you.

- **Purpose:** To rest in God's presence, cultivating a relationship of communion and stillness.
- **Distinct from Other Meditation:** Centering Prayer is not about emptying the mind but about being fully present with God, trusting He is closer than your breath or thoughts.

Benefits:

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Enhances awareness of your inner state and ability to cope with negative emotions.
- Strengthens focus, memory, and a sense of God's presence.

Centering Prayer is about resting in God's presence, holding His hand, and being with Him without agenda. It is simple but not always easy.

- **Mother Teresa Quote:**
When asked, "What do you say when you pray?" Mother Teresa replied, "I don't say anything. I just listen." The interviewer asked, "Well, what does God say to you?" She answered, "Nothing. He just listens, too. And if you can't understand that, then I can't explain it to you."
- **Analogy:** Like going for a walk with a loved one, where the goal is simply to be together, holding hands.
- **Purpose:** Not reading, studying, or asking—just resting and opening your heart to God's presence and love.
- **Scripture:** *Psalm 46:10 (NIV)* – "Be still and know that I am God."
 - In stillness, we find God's presence, the greatest reward.

Key Insight: Centering Prayer is a way to descend into the deepest core of who you are and meet God there, closer than your breath or thoughts.

Challenges and Distractions

When you try to be still with God, distractions are normal—worries, plans, or wandering thoughts. The practice is not about avoiding distractions but about gently returning to God.

- **Goldfish Analogy:** Like a goldfish noticing a castle over and over, our minds wander. Distractions are part of the process.
 - **Solution:** Choose a focal point to return to, such as the name “Jesus” or an image like sitting by a river with Him. When distracted, gently return to this word or image.
 - **Encouragement:** *St. Francis de Sales* – “If all you do is return to God’s presence after distraction, then this is very good prayer. Your persistence shows how much you want to be with God.”
 - **Mindset:** Distractions are not failure. Each return to God is like a repetition in a workout, building your ability to rest in His presence.
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How to Practice Centering Prayer

1. Find a quiet space and sit comfortably.
2. Read *Psalms 62:1-2 (NIV)* a few times:
“Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”
3. Choose a sacred word or phrase (e.g., “Jesus,” “Love,” “Father,” “Spirit”) to center your mind.
4. Sit quietly, focusing on God’s presence. When distracted, gently return to your word or phrase.
5. Aim to rest in God’s loving, healing presence with no agenda.

Tips:

- **Start Small:** Begin with 5-10 minutes and gradually increase to 20 minutes as you grow comfortable.
- **Be Patient:** Distractions are part of the process; each return to God is a victory.
- **Trust Grace:** Like being under anesthesia, trust God, the Great Surgeon, is working in you, even when it feels like “nothing” is happening.
- **Practice Regularly:** Schedule daily time, writing “God” in your calendar to emphasize relationship over obligation.