
Centering Prayer



Jason Phillips

Prayer is not a request for God's favors. True, it has been used to obtain the satisfaction of personal desires. It has even been adopted to reinforce the prejudices, justify violence, and create barriers between people and between countries. But genuine prayer is based on recognizing the Origin of all that exists, and opening ourselves to it...In prayer we acknowledge God as the supreme source from which flows all strength, all goodness, all existence, acknowledging that we have our being, life itself from the supreme Power. One can then communicate with this Source, worship it, and ultimately place ones very center in it.

Piero Ferrucci

Instructions:

The first step is to find a one-syllable word like “God”, “King”, “Love”, or “Abba”. Repeat this word only as a thought comes to mind not over and over like a *mantra*. It doesn't matter what word it is or that the word might have special meaning, it may take you some time to find the word but never use different words in one session of prayer. If you focus on the word it will become a distraction and the point is to get rid of all distractions. Spend at least 20 minutes in this prayer and follow the method below.

1. Find a quiet spot with a chair. Sit upright and be as relaxed and comfortable as you possibly can be. If you can be in the same space every time it is better. You could have pictures of your family, a cross, icon, or picture anything that might draw your attention towards God's love. Keep your eyes closed unless you start to fall asleep.
2. Take some time and settle. Recite the Lord's Prayer, Psalm 23, or another passage to begin centering your attention on God.
3. Once you have settled sit silently. Every time a thought or anything comes to mind recite your word releasing the thought.
The Four R's: (Cynthia Bourgeault *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*)
Resist no thought
Retain no Thought
React to no thought
Return to your sacred word.
4. At the end of your time (20 minutes) recite a bible passage as you did at the beginning to re-enter into the world.

Bibliography and Suggested Reading

Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening by Cynthia Bourgeault

The Cloud of Unknowing by unknown English monk

Contemplative Prayer by Thomas Merton

Merton's Palace of Nowhere by James Finley

Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross