

CENTERING PRAYER in community

CONSENTING TO GOD'S PRESENCE AND ACTION WITHIN

The facilitator may offer words of introduction to help people prepare to enter into the presence of God in silence— as well as close the centering prayer sit by praying the Lord's prayer softly and slowly aloud as others pray silently in their hearts. This provides a gentle reentry from the depths of prayer to the ordinary activities of everyday life. It also provides a sense of closure to the practice.

In her book *Finding Our Way Home* (p. 27-28), Killian Noe provides some concise words and simple steps, saying:

The practice of centering prayer is giving God consent to do what is needed in our lives, turning everything over to God and trusting God with it. In some other forms of prayer, our minds and voices are active, but in centering prayer we let go of all thoughts and words and simply wait before God, giving God access to our entire being, making ourselves totally available to God.

Here are the simple steps of centering prayer — a prayer beyond words:

- **Choose a “prayer word.”** The prayer word, which may be another name we use to call out to God - like Jesus or Lord or Love or Creator - is a symbol and reminder of our intention to give God consent, to surrender, to let go and let God do the healing, transforming work needed in our lives.
- **Prayer of consent.** After getting settled in a comfortable, upright position, we begin our time by praying something like: “God, I open my heart, mind, and entire being to you. Do whatever you will in me and through me. I give you my consent.”
- **When you become aware of being distracted,** simply return to the prayer word. The great teachers of centering prayer reassure us that it is normal for our minds to wander. We can expect to be distracted. Our response to all distractions is simply to return to the prayer word. The prayer word is shorthand for the prayer of consent; it is a restating of our desire for God and our intention to open ourselves to God's loving presence.
- **At the end of the allotted prayer time** (20 minutes), move out of this time gently, mentally, silently pray the Lord's Prayer as the facilitator prays slowly, softly aloud.

Some of us are so programmed to think that it is what we do that matters that we are tempted to evaluate our time of centering prayer as being good or bad. There is no good or bad, no right or wrong, in this kind of prayer. The only thing we do that matters in this kind of prayer is to show up. Even if our minds are spinning uncontrollably during our time of prayer, our showing up expresses our desire, our intention to give God consent, to turn our lives over to God.

*When you let your whole being settle like calm water,
it becomes a tranquil lake in which the sky is reflected,
in which the face of Christ can be seen -
and thereby the true face of one's neighbor as well.*



- *Our principal focus is to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ.*
- It is the opening of mind, heart, body and emotions—our whole being—to God to do in us and through us as He will; to bring us what we need, which is the Spirit of the Living God to fall afresh on us.
- It is an exercise of faith, hope and love. I don't begin to understand it. I just show up daily to practice it.
- It is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion.
- It habituates us to the language of God which is silence. . . . stillness. In stillness, the Psalmist encourages us, we will know.

Practicing Centering Prayer at Home

“Let anyone who thirst come to me and drink.” John 7:37

- **Choose a quiet place** with the intention of honoring it as sacred space, a place that draws you into prayer. Perhaps you already have such a space where you now read or do your daily devotions. Think about what you need. Possibilities: candles, icons, incense, sacred objects, sacred books, quotations on the wall, art reproductions, something meaningful from nature, you get the idea.
- **Get Comfortable.** In addition to a comfortable chair or cushion, you may want to use a prayer shawl or lap rug to stay warm.
- **Have a timer available.** Using a timer enables you to focus entirely on your prayer and not be tempted to keep glancing at the clock to see if the “time’s up” yet. You can use a simple egg timer or buy a dedicated timer. However, if you can splurge, buy a meditation timer that makes a gentle chiming sound or use the free Centering Prayer app to track and time your centering prayer sessions. Something soft not buzzing.
- **Pick a consistent time of day.** Think carefully about what time of day will work best for your body rhythm and life style. It is easier to create a regular practice if you are able to pray at the same time each day. For many getting up a little earlier provides an undisturbed time. The earlier in the day you pray the less likely your prayer time will be gobbled up by other things. Since the general guide is twice a day for twenty minutes, consider your second “sit” upon arriving home from work or before the kids get home from school, or the last thing at night. Most of us need to get creative in carving out a time for our second “sit.” Where there is a *want to* you’ll find a *way to*.
- **Set realistic goals.** Most people find a twenty-minute centering prayer “sit” a breeze while others find it undoable. If you find that twenty minutes is too much of a stretch for you, don’t be discouraged! Five minutes is better than no minutes! The only bad prayer session is a skipped prayer session. If you know from experience that you are completely unable to “sit” for more than five minutes at a time, or that your schedule is so tight that you can only pray on the weekends, keep that in mind. Be easy on yourself! It is good to challenge yourself and work on creating new habits, but don’t set yourself up for certain failure.
- **Acknowledge your need for God.** Centering prayer can help us acknowledge how much we need God. When we see how unable we are to let go of our thoughts, we recognize our limitations and our dependency on God. A few minutes in prayer can help us to stay connected to God. God can and does use our limitations to draw us closer. After all, prayer is about deepening our relationship to God.
- **This is the easiest, hardest thing I’ve ever done,** is a common refrain. Many people think that they are somehow “worse” at centering prayer than others, but the truth is that many people find it a challenge until they get friendly with their thoughts and begin to radically trust that the Holy Spirit is deliberately dismantling their unconscious (false-self) system and awakening their True Self.
- **Secure the support of others.** Have a conversation with those you live with telling them of your intention. Ask for their support. Voice that you need undisturbed time during your prayer time. Most people find it much easier to maintain a home practice if they are practicing in a Centering Prayer group once a week or at least every once in a while. Another option is to find a “centering prayer partner.”
- **Please don’t hesitate to email us** if you have questions or need support. There is no such thing as a stupid question. We’re all in this together. Your question will provide light not only for you but also for others. Colleen Siadak is our Piedmont NC Chapter co-coordinator. Reach her at cmsiadak@gmail.com. Or reach out to Ann Starrette, Starrette@mindspring.com, a frequent presenter.

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