

Centering Prayer

By Susan Vogt

Prayer is a very personal experience of being with God. Each person finds different meaningful ways to pray. Centering Prayer is a style of meditative prayer that many people find significant while others find the long silence boring. The only way you'll find out if it helps you connect with your deepest spiritual yearnings is to try it.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

Nothing, just time and intention to try an alternative way of praying



Prepare in Advance

The main thing you need to do is to carve out about 20 minutes of quiet, private time to devote to trying Centering Prayer.

Activity Plan

1. Background: Centering Prayer has its roots in early Christian monasticism but has become popular more recently through the work of Trappist monks Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating. The core idea is to empty oneself of distractions and focus on being in the presence of God. A mantra (or "love word") is used as an anchor to bring the mind back to God when distractions come – as they generally do.
2. The following steps are summarized from *The Way Back Home* by Basil Pennington. Go to a quiet calm place where you can sit or kneel in a relaxed way for about 20 minutes.
3. Focus on being in the presence of God, the source of your faith and love who dwells in the center of your being. God is not only around you but actually dwells *in* you. In love give yourself to God, your whole attention, all that you are, for about 20 minutes. "I am all yours, Lord, do with me whatever you will."
4. Take up a 'love word' and let it be gently present. Let this word support your focus on God who is the source of faith-filled love. Perhaps choose your favorite name for the Lord: Jesus, Lord, Friend... or a phrase like "Be with me," "Jesus dwells," "Jesus loves me," or "My Lord and my God."
5. Gently say this word deep within yourself and let it quietly repeat itself. No effort. Just let it be there – to keep you there with the Lord – open to God. Let God be present to you in any way God wants.
6. Whenever you become aware of anything else, gently return to God with the use of your prayer word. As you do, let the other things go.
7. At the end of your prayer time let the Our Father (or some other prayer) rise within you.
8. If possible, it helps to try to do Centering Prayer twice a day. Shifting the center of your life to the Lord, holding everybody and everything in love, comes about more quickly when done this way.