Pacific InterChristian Community

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is a receptive method of contemplative prayer or meditation. Contemplative prayer is prayer in silence for the opening of our whole being to divine energies and love. We open our awareness to Presence that is within and around us -- closer than breathing, closer than consciousness. We train our eyes, ears, minds and hearts to attend to being Itself, to the "inner voice of love" re-minding us that we are beloved.

The Method of Centering Prayer

Centering prayer offers the ancient teaching of mystical prayer (found in both Eastern and Western spiritual traditions) in an updated form, to be used as a vital part of daily practice. During the time of prayer, we open ourselves fully to the power of divine presence and unconditional love working within us. As we engage in this prayer one of the "fruits" we may notice is a growing attentiveness to God's presence in daily life.

The Guidelines

- Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to be open to God's presence and action within you (examples might be "Jesus," "Thank-you" "Presence" of "Trust") Once you choose a word, use the same word throughout the prayer period.
- Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly into the presence of God by taking a few deep breaths and letting go of all thoughts and distractions. Silently say your sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within your heart. Continue this prayer for twenty minutes. Do this twice a day, preferably in the morning and in the late afternoon.
- When you become aware that you are engaged in thoughts or distractions during the prayer, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. Return to content-free openness.
- At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Close your time with God by reciting a familiar prayer.

It is important to remember that the "letting go" process of Centering Prayer Meditation is as important as the experience of stillness. The many distractions, images and thoughts that arise are simply normal and human – don't be discouraged. Think of them as opportunities to practice letting go, and returning once again to content-free openness to God.

Further Reading:
Centering Prayer, Basil Pennington. Centering Prayer and Inner Awareness, Cynthia Bourgeault
Open Mind, Open Heart, Thomas Keating Centering Prayer in Daily Life and Ministry, edited by Gustave Reininger
(Revised 2.08)