



Centering Prayer

Cynthia Bourgeault

Centering Prayer is simply sitting in silence, open to God's love and our love for God.

A brief overview of the Centering Prayer practice:

- It is preferable to find a quiet place to sit comfortably where you will be undisturbed for the period of time you are setting aside for your centering prayer. That said, you can still proceed with your practice even if the environment and conditions are not ideal.
- There are a variety of meditation benches, cushions and sitting accessories widely available, but sitting upright in a standard chair is perfectly fine.
- The prescribed daily practice is a minimum of two 20-minute sits. If at all possible, this amount is most recommended to start and maintain a dedicated practice. A timer or nearby clock is helpful to time the sitting period. (Beginners can start with 5, 10, 15 min. increments.)
- An aid to help in returning to the essence of the practice is to select and use **a sacred word or short phrase or image** that can act as a placeholder or symbol for your commitment.
- Aiming to stay relaxed but attentive, close your eyes, and start your practice period grounded in your basic commitment to be open and available to God.
- Each time you notice yourself becoming absorbed in a thought, and without making a problem of your distraction, **gently release** your attention from the thought and inwardly **say your sacred word**. Your sacred word is not constantly repeated like a mantra, but only used as much as required to bring yourself back into alignment with your original intention.
- In the context of this practice, a thought is defined as anything that brings your attention to a focal point. This could be an idea, vision, memory, emotion, or dwelling upon a physical sensation. If it captures your attention, it's considered a thought, and by letting go you are renewing your intention and consent for "God's presence and action within."
- As you continue in the prayer period and thoughts inevitably come to you, use your sacred word to gently and quickly clear your mental debris, and to return to open awareness and availability.
- When the allotted time is up, slowly open your eyes. Without rushing, take a few minutes to allow yourself to come back to your usual state of consciousness.
- If planning longer periods of sitting, many find a very slow meditative walk after each 20 minutes or so helps to keep the body more comfortable and alert.

Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Method and Practice of Centering Prayer, The Wisdom Way of Knowing* at <https://wisdomwayofknowing.org/resource-directory/centering-prayer/>



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