

Centering Prayer

Sandals Church

By Pastor Dan Crowley

Spiritual Formation and Soul Care

PURPOSE: To move your heart away from the constant barrage of feelings, impulses and personal desires and towards a state of stillness that comes from resting at the center of God's divine love for you.

INSTRUCTIONS: Take time to bring your body, mind and soul to a place of stillness, releasing your thoughts and emotions to the Lord; the One who loves you perfectly. He desires for you to rest with Him. He desires to let you know just how much he really does love you and has your best interest. You've probably heard the phrase, "Just let it go." But the question remains, "What does that mean... exactly? And more importantly, how does one go about doing it?" These are valid questions that demand a responsible answer.

PRACTICE:

1. Create a time where you can be alone and unhurried. Start by setting aside 15 minutes, increasing your time as you desire or are led to do so. Set for yourself a timer if you need to so that you will know when your time is finished.
2. Find a comfortable position to sit or lay down. Settle into your favorite chair or lay down on your bed. Find a comfortable place to simply be still with the Lord Jesus.
3. This next step requires intentionality. Close your eyes and imagine you are in the presence of Jesus. Call to Him. See Him come and sit with you. Be in His presence and stay there.
4. Choose a word or phrase that has meaning to you. For example, "The Lord is my shepherd" or a word like grace, peace, love, Jesus, etc. Find a word or phrase that has meaning to you and make it sacred. Making it sacred simply means to make it the word or phrase that, when the distractions come, brings you back to God.
5. Once you have your word, become quiet externally and internally. This is the part where you will probably begin to hear similar thoughts as in the past or be tempted to think about things going on in your life. If this happens to you, that's totally fine. Simply allow the thoughts to come. Don't resist them. Recognize them and then imagine that you are setting them next to Jesus for Him to watch over. Set them down and release them to His care for the duration of your prayer time.

The idea here is for you to allow your mind and heart to dump all the noise so that you can rest in God alone. If it's your voice, set it down. If it's something that distracts you from God's presence, set it down. Set it all down, releasing it to the care of Jesus.

Don't worry if this part seems like a lot of busy work as you learn to practice this exercise. Simply persist and in time, you will find that this step will become more and more quiet. This step takes discipline on your part to set the objects down and release them to Jesus.

6. As you set each thought or emotion down, use your sacred word to return to the presence of God. Allow your sacred word to bring you back to God's presence and rest with Him once more. Trust that the Holy Spirit will facilitate this process for you.
7. When your time is up allow yourself to come out of this prayer time slowly. Don't rush the process. Breathe in the love of Christ slowly, filling your lungs, and then breathe out. Offer yourself to Christ for the things that await you at the end of this exercise (e.g.: "Jesus, I am yours" or "Remain with me").

FINAL THOUGHTS: Remember, when you practice spiritual disciplines you are not doing so for the purposes of manipulating God to some grand and glorious experience. You practice the disciplines as a way of offering yourself to Him, opening your head and heart to Him, so that you can grow in greater intimacy with Him. Resist the urge to "create" something from this exercise. It just may be that there isn't a lot to report on as you practice this exercise. If this is the case, resist the temptation to be discouraged. Simply open yourself to the Lord accepting whatever He would give you from your time together. Allow your soul to express to you that you've been with the Lord.

With that being said, be open to the unexpected as well as the expected. Who knows the mind of God? Which one of us is able to say that God should do this or that? God is God and able to do all things. Be willing to accept whatever comes from Him in your time together. *Trust that He knows you intimately and loves you perfectly.*

May you offer yourself to the Lord in spirit and in truth, learning to trust Him more deeply as you rest in the center of His divine love. May your soul be awakened to His presence and may you experience shalom as well as healing for your soul.