



Trappist monk Basil Pennington writes "A parent is delighted when their little one...runs and climbs into their arms...". Our centering prayer is much like that. We settle down in God's loving arms. Our mind, our thoughts may flit about here and there...but essentially we are choosing to remain for this time intimately with God our loving parent, giving ourselves to God, receiving God's love and care, letting God enjoy us...It is a very simple prayer. It is a very childlike prayer. It is prayer that opens to us all the delights of the Kingdom." -
- A Glimpse of Jesus by Brennan Manning, pp. 83-85.

In centering prayer, we choose for a period of time to simply be quiet in God's presence, not saying anything but simply resting in God's love. This is challenging as our minds like to wander, so it's helpful to choose a word to help you to remain centered in God. This word is called a prayer word/sacred word, a word that expresses your desire to be still and intimately present with God. We use the word as a way of entering into this time with God; and when our thoughts wander, we return to that word as a way of letting go of that

thought and coming back to our time with God.

In choosing a prayer word: You might choose your most familiar name for God, like God, Jesus, Father, Mother, Lord, Spirit. Jesus called God Abba. The early church used the name of Jesus. Or you might choose a word that expresses your desire to be with God, like love, peace, trust, grace, mercy, joy, presence, shelter, home.

You use one prayer word for the duration of your prayer. In time there may be one word which you naturally use each time you pray. As you grow in this prayer practice, there may be times you don't need to use a word at all, and you are able to simply turn back to God when thoughts wander.

Prayer Practice:

- Sitting comfortably with eyes closed, use a sacred word you have chosen or ask the Holy Spirit to give you a prayer word. Waiting on the Spirit's prompting, let the word emerge from deep within you.
- Gently introduce that word as you begin 20 minutes of Centering Prayer. With your word you state your consent to God's presence and action. There's nothing else you need to do; just be still with God.
- When you find yourself thinking about something, let go of that thought by returning to your sacred word. This is not a violent or forced action but a very gentle one.
- Close the time of pray with thanksgiving.

When experiencing this type of prayer for the first time, it may feel strange, nonproductive or difficult. Don't give up! In our culture of "doing" it feels quite different simply to "be." You might try a shorter time period to begin with, and gradually increase the amount of time you spend in this prayer practice. Give it some time and practice, and may be surprised to find yourself looking forward to this time of simply being in God's presence, loving and being loved.

Gleaned from *Forty Days to a Closer Walk with God* by J. David Muyskens. Copyright © 2006 by J. David Muyskens. Published by Upper Room Books.)

For more ideas on centering prayer, <http://alivenow.upperroom.org/2011/06/27/centering-prayer/>