

GUIDELINES

The most important thing to remember is that this is a practice. And the reason we practice is so that we can continue to deepen our relationship with God, not so we can perfect the prayer form itself.

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within, perhaps from the reading or another word that connects you to God.
2. Sit comfortably with straight back and feet on the floor to allow for easy breathing. Then, settle in and silently introduce the sacred word.
3. When the bell sounds, follow the sound into the silence.
4. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. If you fall asleep, simply return to prayer when you awaken.
5. When the bell sounds again to end the silence, allow yourself to come slowly back to the space. Remain in silence until the leader invites reflection.
6. Our reflection is a time is for you to notice the fruits of this prayer – what has moved within you and your own experience of opening to God.

RESOURCES

www.contemplativeoutreach.org They also have a free Centering Prayer mobile app you can download.

Open Mind, Open Heart: 20th Anniversary Edition (2006) by Thomas Keating

The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living: Excerpts from the Works of Thomas Keating, ed. Iachetta (2009)

Contemplative Prayer (1969) by Thomas Merton

Eternal Echoes (1999) by John O’Donohue

CLOSING PRAYER

May we find peace with those we love,
growing together over time.

May we be at peace with ourselves
and with the labors that fill our days.

May we fashion peace in our world
with wisdom and gentle patience.

Blessed are you, God, who blesses us with peace.

Mishkan T’filah, pg 97

FIRST READING PSALM 95 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

Come, let us sing to the Holy One; *
 let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.
 Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving, *
 and raise a loud shout with psalms.
 For you, O God, are a great God; *
 you are great above all gods.
 In your hand are the caverns of the earth, *
 and the heights of the hills are yours also.
 The sea is yours, for you made it, *
 and your hands have molded the dry land.
 Come, let us bow down and bend the knee, *
 and kneel before God, our Maker,

For you are our God, and we are the people of your
 pasture and the sheep of your hand, *
 Oh, that today we would hearken to your voice!
 Harden not your hearts,
 as your forebears did in the wilderness, *
 at Meribah, and on that day at Massah,
 when they tempted me;
 They put me to the test, *
 though they had seen my works.
 Forty years long I detested that generation and said, *
 "This people are wayward in their hearts;
 they do not know my ways."
 So I swore in my wrath, *
 "They shall not enter into my rest."

SECOND READING

14 For this reason I bow my knees before God, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of God's glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through the Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

Divine love is compassionate, tender, luminous, totally self-giving, seeking no reward, unifying everything... The experience of being loved by God enables us to accept our false self as it is, and then to let go of it and journey to our true Self. The inward journey to our true Self is the way to divine love... The growing awareness of our true Self, along with the deep sense of spiritual peace and joy which flow from this experience, balances the psychic pain of the disintegrating and dying of the false self. As the motivating power of the false self diminishes, our true Self builds the *new self* with the motivating force of divine love.

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