

# Centering Prayer

## Week 5

### Simplicity and Awakening in God (Audiobook Chapter 10, Book, Chapter 11)

#### Simplicity

There is something simple about God. Simple like a child's laughter that breaks forth spontaneously, without guile. Simple like when you act, immediately and directly, to help someone who falls in front of you. Simple like the way you just find yourself awake in bed, all of a sudden, in the morning sunlight. God is simple like the way every moment of time, in its ordinariness, holds the gift of your life – like this moment right now.

Entering into a simple centering prayer practice and remaining with its simplicity awakens you to God's simplicity. When you simplify your mind's actions in centering prayer, you reduce them from many to one. In meditation, your many thoughts and strategies of finding truth, of seeking God, of discovering what your own life is about, are simplified. In the clear, immediate, unadorned moment of life, God just is.

Centering prayer is rooted in simplicity:

- Choose a sacred word or image as a symbol of your intention to **consent to God's presence and action within**.
- When engaged with your thoughts, **ever so gently** return to the sacred word.

There is no need to complicate centering prayer. Grounded in the simplicity of God, you find you are much more than your scattered thoughts and emotions. You are created in the image and likeness of God. The transformation that contemplation initiates shows its fruits in life, as the Mind of Christ comes to life more and more in you, expressing itself in greater compassion and freedom. The fruits of God's life in you express themselves in a straightforward way, naturally, effortlessly, plainly, cleanly, without any added affectation or decoration.

#### Awakening

Like the simple ground you stand on, the ground that sustains you all the time, God is always here. What do you have to do to find the ground? In the Christian contemplative tradition, you cannot find it by thinking about it. There is nothing complex about receiving the Mind of Christ. Begin by practicing the intention to let go of other thoughts and embrace the simple consent of unknowing faith. As the consent deepens, be transformed as you let go of thinking other thoughts. And ultimately, simply recognize the solid ground you are already standing on, right here and right now.

Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Little children are, quite simply, simple in mind and being. Life is given without you having to earn it. You are in relationship with God at the level of your being. In this relationship, you do not have to do anything but just be in God.

## **Simplicity in Life**

In contemplative practice, your daily life gradually becomes a sacred word, silently spoken by God to the world around you.

This dynamic is symbolized by the story of Jesus’ encounter with two sisters. Mary and Martha. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. Her sister, Martha is consumed and distracted by the details and activity of preparing a meal for Jesus. Martha complains to Jesus about what her sister is doing, telling him to get Mary to help her with her many tasks. But Jesus answers, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her (Luke 10:41-42).

Mary and Martha represent two valuable parts of your own nature. You are both contemplative and active. The greater spiritual task is to discover Mary’s contemplative way of relating to Christ’s indwelling presence and then integrate the simplicity of contemplative practice into your active life. You are invited to bring Mary’s simplicity into Martha’s activity, in both your interior and exterior lives. As Teresa of Avila said, “So be occupied in prayer not for the sake of enjoyment but so as to have the strength to serve. Mary and Martha must combine.”

Practicing centering prayer while experiencing complex thoughts and boredom helps you realize greater simplicity in active life. We are invited to simply settle into the ordinary moments (grocery store lines, traffic, being put on hold, waiting rooms, etc.) rather than anxiously distracting ourselves with another activity. Ordinary moments are the invitation to open again and again to the presence of God acting in the moment, within ourselves and within each person we encounter.

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This 10 week series is taken from David Frenette’s book and audio workshop on Centering Prayer.

- The Path to Centering Prayer: Deepening Your Experience of God, David Frenette, 2017.
- Centering Prayer Meditations: Effortless Contemplation to Deepen Your Experience of God, David Frenette (2014, Audiobook)