

## Centering Prayer Week 6

*“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.” Romans 8: 26-27*

### **Gentleness and Effortlessness (Chapter 12 in Book and Audiobook)**

*“When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.”*

In contemplation there is a delicate balance between doing and being. You bring all of yourself to the contemplative path, including your actions, your efforts, and your dedication, yet action that becomes too effortful interferes with your receptivity to God. Too often effort is contaminated with struggle. Actually, the sense that you have to achieve something, find some deeper depth, or go somewhere other than where you are now to discover God is an illusion. Acting in gentleness shifts you out of the struggle to find God. Gentleness is necessary for the deepening of centering prayer.

Centering prayer is effortless in the same way that the falling of snow is effortless. It is effortless in the same way that a light breeze blowing on your neck is effortless. It is effortless in the same way that the petals of a flower open into the sunlight. As gentle as a drop of dew forming on a blade of grass.

In receptive effortlessness, there is nowhere to go, nothing to deepen, not even any need to be gentle. The depth of contemplation is just being, effortlessly, in God.

*“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” Philippians 4:5*

Christ’s life within you is gentleness itself. Contemplation involves letting Christ’s gentle life become your own life. In contemplative practice, you gradually find that you are drawn into letting your effort burn away, letting it evaporate in the radiant light of God’s gentleness. Let go of struggle. Easily and continually let go and relax into Christ’s unseen, gentle nature within you.

Each gentle return to your sacred word is a prayer, an act of love. You are enfolded in Christ’s gentleness. As Christ’s gentleness becomes the source of your prayer, gentleness comes through you, both in prayer and in action. In life you gradually learn to move through the busyness of your ordinary world with greater ease of spirit. As you struggle less in life, divine love and compassion act through you, arising spontaneously and easily as an expression of God’s presence within. As you consent to God’s presence and action, you find

that everything, including your own actions, arises from God's gentleness. God's presence acts in you and through you.

God's nature is already in you. God's love is gratuitous, unearned. There is no effort to receiving this love, no struggle to awakening this nature. Just easily, gently say yes to it, as a gift already given, already here. You just practice, acting in gentleness, until you experience how God's gentleness is awakening in you. Then receiving the gift of contemplation is effortless. Then you can live in it, effortlessly, more and more. With time, gentleness and effortlessness intertwine in your actions in centering prayer and in your receptivity to contemplation.

*"When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word."*

*"I will leave on one side everything I can think and choose for my own love that which I cannot think. Why? Because God may well be loved, but not thought."* (The Cloud of Unknowing, 14<sup>th</sup> Century)

*"Thoughts are not an obstacle in Centering Prayer, but an opportunity. Each new thought gives you chance to gently exercise that "muscle" of letting go."* Cynthia Bourgeault

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This 10 week series is based on 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)