



## Centering Prayer Guide

Courtesy of Phil Fox Rose, BustedHalo.com

Here's a simple framework to start with:

1. **Choose a sacred word**, one or two syllables, with spiritual meaning but not distractingly important to you. — Mine is "Oneness."
2. **Sit *comfortably***. — I kneel with a sitting cushion, or sit in a chair. I don't believe in sitting uncomfortably.
3. **Time 20 minutes**. Use a method where you don't have to check. — I use a timer. You can record 20 minutes of silence followed by a sound and hit play. There are iPhone apps that can do what you need as well. (If you can't do 20 minutes at first, do less rather than not doing it, but something happens to the stillness around 10 to 15 minutes in, that you will miss. That's why 20+ is nearly universal.)
4. **Eyes open or closed**. — I keep mine open, unfocused and glancing down slightly. I learned early on that if my eyes are closed I'm more prone to daydream. Open helps keep me more alert. Others prefer eyes closed.
5. **Settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word** as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
6. **Resist no thought; retain no thought; react to no thought**. When you realize you are engaged with your thoughts, including sensations and feelings, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. — This is what it's all about. You may drift into not needing the word, just "resting in God." Or you may stay in this attachment-surrender loop the whole time. As Father Thomas Keating, the founder of Centering Prayer, says, ten thousand thoughts means "ten thousand opportunities to return to God." The goal is not emptiness. As Cynthia Bourgeault says, "striving for emptiness is a surefire way to guarantee that your meditation will be a constant stream of thoughts."

At the end of the period, remain in silence for a couple of minutes.