

Sermon Title: **Spiritual Discipline 4 - Centering Prayer**

Bible: Matthew 6:6 & Psalm 46

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on November 17th, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for calling us to this faith community. In this faith community, we want to be healed, to grow and to be mature. Please pour out your love and grace upon us and this community. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Spiritual Discipline Questionnaire

Today's message is the fourth and the last one in the series of Spiritual Discipline. I am collecting Spiritual Life Questions from last month. So far, I collected three questionnaires. I hope that I can collect more and know the congregation more and better.

In this survey, there are many spiritual practices: worship, Bible reading, prayer, holy communion, gardening, drawing, service to others, tithing and giving, and small groups. Today, I would like to introduce the centering prayer that I do for my spiritual life.

2. What is Centering Prayer?

Is there anyone who does the practice of centering prayer? Have you heard of centering prayer? I learned this form of prayer in a spiritual formation class at seminary. I have forgotten many things that I learned at seminary. But I still do this centering prayer. Probably because I

am an introvert, I love this prayer. I believe that God creates all of you in God's image, and the Holy Spirit is with all of you. I also believe that God is with me. Before I am the pastor, before the husband, before Hwapyoung, I am a child of God. Like a baby, I just want to rest in God. Somehow, in silence, I feel the presence of God. I want to see that God's presence overflows in my daily life.

In my experience and learning, centering prayer can be one type of meditation, but it is a unique and special Christian Tradition. I have heard that many monks and nuns have practiced this spiritual practice. Even Mother Teresa did this practice every day, while she helped many people in India. So, centering prayer is not something new. It is kind of a re-discovery of our precious traditional prayer.

3. How To Do Centering Prayer

How can we learn to swim? Just reading a book about swimming or watching a swimmer does not help us to swim. In order to swim, we need to get into the water. How about learning how to do centering prayer and doing it? Here! And now!

First, choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. For example, you can choose Lord, God, Jesus, Grace, Love, etc. In my case, I choose God. The sacred word itself is not God, but it works like the door to God's presence. In other words, it shows our intention toward God.

Second, sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within. As we sit

comfortably, we breathe in and breathe out softly. And then, gently follow the sacred word in your mind.

Third, when engaged with your thoughts (including body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections), return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. When you do centering prayer, many things come to you: feelings, images, good and bad memories, worries, plans, noise, to-do lists, awesome ideas, etc. This is a normal part of this prayer. Please do not fight against any of them. Just let them be there. But our intention is toward God's presence. Please return to the sacred word gently.

Fourth, at the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Please slowly and gently come back from the centering prayer.

4. Taste of Centering Prayer (5 minutes)

Usually, this centering prayer lasts 20 minutes. But we will do just 5 minutes. Even though it is short, I hope that we can taste the centering prayer. There will be a gong sound at the beginning and at the end. Choose your sacred word. And sit comfortably. Focus on your sacred word gently.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know.

Be Still.

Be.

(Gong sound -> 5 minutes -> Gong sound)

Gently come back. Slowly open your eyes.

5. How was the 5 minutes of Centering Prayer?

How was it? Did 5 minutes seem short or long? Easy or difficult? Did you have many thoughts during the prayer? Any physical sensations?

Thank you so much for participating in a trial run. If you want to know more about centering prayer, I have some brochures. Please come to me after worship.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you are our refuge and strength. We want to rest in your presence. You are the one we are looking for. In many prayers, in our daily life, please be with us in your grace and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. What spiritual practice do you do?
2. Do you have any kind of prayer that you love?

References

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-1>