Moses Project Spiritual Practices Fall 2021

**Silence and Contemplative Prayer**

We live in a world that is full of noise. We are so accustomed to it that silence can sometimes be uncomfortable! Silence as a spiritual practice calls us to set aside distractions and busyness in order to rest in God’s presence. It invites us to quiet our words so that we can listen for God’s voice. Silence makes way for contemplative prayer, which William McNamara called, “a long, loving look at the real.” It calls us to see value in presence rather than productivity, reminding us that we are more than what we do. In this kind of prayer practice, we simply seek to pay attention with openness to the Spirit, allowing our heart to take the lead rather than our mind.

Contemplative prayer can take many forms. Centering prayer is a contemplative prayer practice in which one sits in silence in God’s presence, returning to a sacred word when noticing engagement with thoughts or sensations. (Learn more through Contemplative Outreach: [https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/](https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-method/).) Breath prayer integrates the repetition of a short prayer with the rhythm of the breath. For example, [in breath] “Holy Spirit, [out breath] grant me peace.” Scripture or hymn phrases might also be used. This prayer form might be practiced while sitting quietly, during meditative movement or even during routine tasks. While this practice uses words, the repetition allows them to sink into us and creates space for deepened awareness of the Holy. More informal practices might invite us to take a slow, prayerful walk, appreciating God’s presence in nature or in the faces of those we encounter. Or we might simply sit quietly with the intention of opening our hearts to God.

In a Group: Choose one of the contemplative prayer practices suggested above or consider sharing a meal together in silence. Remind participants to be open to God’s presence through whichever practice you choose. After the silent practice has ended, call the group together to reflect on their experience.

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Andrea Severson is a licensed mental health counselor and spiritual director. Her degrees include a Master of Science in counseling from Drake University and a Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. She holds a certificate in spiritual direction and is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Andrea enjoys hearing the unique stories of the individuals and couples with whom she works.  Her areas of interest include anxiety, depression, trauma, identity, faith and spirituality, life transitions, and relationships.  Andrea is a member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association and Spiritual Directors International. In her spare time, she likes reading historical fiction, listening to the Beatles and camping.