

## Coming to God in the Silence

This form of prayer was practised by monks and nuns in England as early as the 12th Century – possibly before that.

Basically, there are two steps:

1. Bringing ourselves into a place of relaxation.

Some people do this by what is called the breath prayer; so, according to the natural rhythm of your breathing, just concentrate on breathing in and out and, if your mind wanders, just bring it back to your breathing.

Other people like to concentrate on the word “Je—sus” as they breathe in and out; some people “Fa—ther.” There are lots of different word patterns and many of you might have your own.

Another way of bringing oneself into stillness, so that all the cares of the world go away and we are in a position to be focussed, is to think of somewhere where you felt really calm and peaceful. So that might be somewhere like a beach, or by a lake, or a stream or a wood or a meadow or just somewhere you have been that is special to you, and you just imagine yourself in that place and relax there.

So that is the first part.

2. The second part usually needs some stimulus, for example:

- a candle
- a piece of music
- a picture; or
- some words from the Bible/other Christian literature we are reading or listening to.

### **Meditation**

If your attention is caught by some words, a sentence or a phrase from a reading, then just think about whatever has caught your attention. Just think about it over and over again. As you chew it over in your mind, ask God to show you what He wants to tell you about it.

### **Contemplation**

This is the other form of silent prayer. *Contemplation* is where we contemplate, or think about, God. Again, this often requires some stimulus. It might even come from one of the hymns we've sung this evening or from the beauty of the day. Something that makes us feel how wonderful God is and so we just stay in that place and just think how wonderful He is and, maybe, ask Him if there is anything He wants to say to us.

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Some people just like to sit with God in the silence, as if they were sitting with a friend in companionable silence, just enjoying each other's company. There might be other ways that you've done this; if so, just do your own thing!

One of the things I want to bring out from the New Testament reading (the Parable of the Prodigal Son) is that the father, or any man with a position of authority, *would not run!* The fact that this father was so *delighted* to see his son that he *ran* just shows us something of how much God is longing to enjoy the company of each one of us this evening.

### **Practical experience**

I thought it would be a good idea to actually come to God in the silence, so this is what we are going to do.

1. In a moment, I shall sit down and we shall have about two minutes in which to do the breathing prayer so that we can relax ourselves.
2. Then I shall read part of a very long prayer (called *Shalom* by Dennis Wrigley) that is based on Psalm 139. I shall read the first part of the prayer and then we'll have a couple of minutes for meditation or contemplation.
3. I shall then read the remainder of the prayer, which will be followed by another little gap of about two minutes silence. I don't want to make it too long. For some of you, that won't be long enough while, for others, it will be too long. Of course, if you want to do this at home, you can spend as long as you wish in silence.

I'm going to pause now and we'll go into a time of just stilling ourselves before the Lord.

*[Enjoy a period of silence while you relax using the breathing prayer.]*

As I pray this prayer in the first person, it is for each of us to take as our own.

I come as myself.  
Just as I am.  
This moment.  
My feelings,  
my fears,  
my joys, my sadnesses.  
You see me as I really am.  
You know me  
through and through.  
You see all, all that I am,  
or ever have been.

You knew me  
at the moment of my creation  
and even then you loved me.

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You knew me and loved me in my mother's womb.  
My nature was known to You.  
You called me by my name,  
You held me in your arms,  
You embraced me,  
You breathed upon me;  
You gave me Your life and Your love.  
You watched over me  
From my earliest childhood.

*[Silence]*

Every experience in my life is laid before You.  
Every image I have seen,  
Each touch, each sensation,  
every word I have ever heard or spoken,  
each word, each idea,  
each thought which is imprinted in my soul  
and is known to You.  
You know me better than I know myself.

You know...  
and because of who I am  
and in spite of what I am – You love me.  
I am of inestimable value to You.  
You love me through and through.  
Nothing, nobody can remove me from Your love.  
Nothing, nobody can separate me  
from Your love or Your presence.

*[Silence]*

**Closing prayer**

Thank you, Father, for the time we have each spent with You this evening. Draw us ever closer to You, day by day. Amen.