**“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10**

Though most authors trace the roots of Centering Prayer to the contemplative prayer of the [Desert Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers) of early [Christian monasticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism), to the [Lectio Divina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina) tradition of [Benedictine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedictine) [monasticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monasticism), and to works like [*The Cloud of Unknowing*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Cloud_of_Unknowing) and the writings of [St. Teresa of Avila](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Teresa_of_Avila) and [St. John of the Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._John_of_the_Cross), its origins as part of the "Centering Prayer" movement in modern Catholicism and Christianity can be traced to several books published by three [Trappist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trappist) monks of [St. Joseph's Abbey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Joseph%27s_Abbey) in Spencer, Massachusetts in the 1970s: Fr. [William Meninger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Meninger), Fr. [M. Basil Pennington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basil_Pennington) and Abbot [Thomas Keating](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Keating).

What Centering Prayer is:

* It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.
* It is an exercise of faith, hope, and love.
* It is a movement beyond conversation to communion.
* It habituates us to the language of God which is silence.

Thomas Keating: Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.; 9 William

The Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within.
2. 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.
3. When engaged with your thoughts\*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. \*thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections

The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God’s presence and action within. The sacred word is chosen during a brief period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to inspire us with one that is especially suitable for us.

* Examples: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Mary, Amen.
* Other possibilities: Love, Peace, Mercy, Listen, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust, Yes.