

Prayer and Meditation

Meditation is a process in which we shift from thinking to feeling. It is a **journey** from the complexity of mind to the simplicity of heart. It is a focused concentration on something that we are meditating on. Meditation **connects us to God**. Meditation **focuses our attention on God** and within. In meditation our worries, anxieties and restlessness begin to settle and the power of God begins to reflect in our conscience, just as a glass of muddy water, when kept still, becomes clean gradually, leaving the mud at the bottom.

We all think that we don't have time for God. Suppose God were too busy to take care of you? What then? Know that you are a child of God, waiting to enter into the Kingdom of God. St. Teresa of the Child Jesus says that prayer consists "**not in thinking much, but in loving much**". Thought is subordinate to love. Although we think during meditation, our purpose is not to become more learned, but to increase our ability to love God more. When your activities are in line with prayer and meditation, then all your activities are prayers.

Restlessness cannot produce the fire of concentration. A wet match cannot be ignited, so a mind saturated with doubts and restlessness is unable to produce the fire of concentration. When you sit for meditation, choose a fixed place, make yourself comfortable, **feel the presence of God**, forgive everyone unconditionally and ask the Lord to forgive your sins. Then with a clean conscience ask the Lord to guide and lead you in prayer and meditation.

You may read The Bible or any other devotional books like: Lives of Saints, Imitation of Christ or Divine Intimacy, etc. to put the soul in a proper mood for conversation with God. These books act like bait to the soul. Savor the words which are read, like birds who, when they drink water, bend their heads towards the water, take a few drops and raise their heads toward the sky and swallow slowly, and then begin again. We need to do this, so that our minds may be fully impregnated with these thoughts that are read. Meditate deeply until the essence touches you and keeps you calm and peaceful. **Don't be in a hurry to get up**, but be in the same state, enjoying the presence of the Lord. Slavery to our senses is the worst enemy of our happiness and peace. Temptations may come, but don't invite or entertain any temptations. Conclude your meditation with the Lord's prayer, "**Our Father**". Then go on your way, living your prayer in all your activities.

What you feel and experience during your prayer and meditation, you must keep it with you at all times. Don't go the old ways, but **hold on to the calm after effects of your prayer and meditation**. You may not experience all the **signs of true meditation** at once, but you will surely get it gradually as you proceed in the habit of meditation and prayer every day for at least twenty minutes. Some of the **signs of meditation are**: an increase of peacefulness during meditation; an inner experience of calmness; deepening of ones understanding of self; mental and physical efficiency in ones' life; love for meditation and prayer more than anything in the world; expanding consciousness of loving all as you love yourself and your own people; and actual contact with God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray and meditate, not only with my mind, but especially with my heart; teach me to reflect devoutly and lovingly that I may live always in your presence.

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