

Some Ways of Biblical Meditation and Prayer

Elijah learns to listen

At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." ¹¹He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19.9-13

Prayer is a deepening relationship with ourselves, with GOD and with the world we live in. Like all relationships, it involves time, effort and honesty.

Biblical meditation is deeply rooted in Christian tradition, although we have lost touch with this ancient way of prayer. There is no right or wrong way, it just takes practice.

Biblical meditation can help us come to stillness of body and spirit.

Often when we pray, as beloved children of GOD, we talk freely with GOD about whatever is on our heart and mind. We use words that come most naturally to us. We balance this intimacy with the awe, wonder and reverence that is due to God in heaven. We may learn to listen to God in prayer.

In Biblical meditation we aim to enter silence and stillness and listen. We use far fewer words and aim for stillness and quiet. Even with distractions, when we devote our love, time and effort to it, we can find more stillness and quiet in our lives.

A single word or short phrase, spoken inwardly, helps us shift our attention from the immediate, pressing thoughts and concerns that occupy our minds.

Once the never-ending activity of our minds has been stilled, we find it easier to enter into an awareness of the loving Spirit of Jesus deep within our heart. Rather than a long list of petitions, it is a beginning of placing our life, context and community into the mystery of God's love.

As the psalmist tells us, **"Be still and know that I am God"**.

In his prayer, Jesus uses the most close, intimate and personal name for GOD that his language knows, **'Abba'**.

As Mother Julian of Norwich said, "God is the still point at my centre".

'Be Still and know that I AM GOD ...' – Psalm 46.10

Psalm 46 is actually about the cessation of warfare, an all-time hope for humanity. However, it is also very powerful to help each of us start to slow down.

⁸**Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.**

⁹**He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.**

¹⁰**"Be still, and know that I am God!" I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."**

Psalm 46.8-10

Start by inwardly 'saying' the phrase '**Be still and know that I am GOD**' a few times.

Then inwardly slowly say the phrase in the same way, dropping one word from the end each time:

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

Be

Breathing Prayer

"Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord!" *Psalm 150:6*

Prayer is as fundamental to the health of the soul and spirit as breath is to the life of the body. To breathe is to participate in an essential rhythm of life.

If we weave prayer into our breathing, we find ourselves more able to approach the mystery of unceasing prayer,

'Pray without ceasing' *1 Thess.5: 17.*

Getting Started

Simply sit comfortably, breathe quietly and prayerfully and be present to GOD and yourself ...

- Choose a quiet time and place where you will not be disturbed
- Sit still and upright, with your back straight
- Close your eyes lightly
- Breathe calmly and regularly
- Begin by thanking GOD for this moment
- Choose a single word or phrase, such as Abba-Father or Emmanuel or Maranatha
- When you are ready, begin inwardly and silently to 'say' this word or phrase
- Try and give each syllable the same and equal length: Ma-ra-na-tha
- 'Say' the word or phrase as you breath out, and then just let your breath return to you naturally
- When you are ready, return to your 'usual' way of praying with thanksgiving or praise or adoration

Thich Nhat Hanh—Eastern philosopher:

Live in the Present

Our true home is in the present moment.

To live in the present moment is a miracle.

The miracle is not to walk on water.

The miracle is to walk on the green Earth in the present moment.

Finally, if you find sleep difficult at night, some people find it helpful to quietly and simply thank GOD for each part of your body starting from the toes, arches of your feet, heel, ankle, shins, knees, and slowly moving up your body.

