



Retreat-In-Place: Unwind from Anxiety and Re-Center on Christ

◆ Centering Prayer or Labyrinth “Walk” ◆ (10-20 minutes)

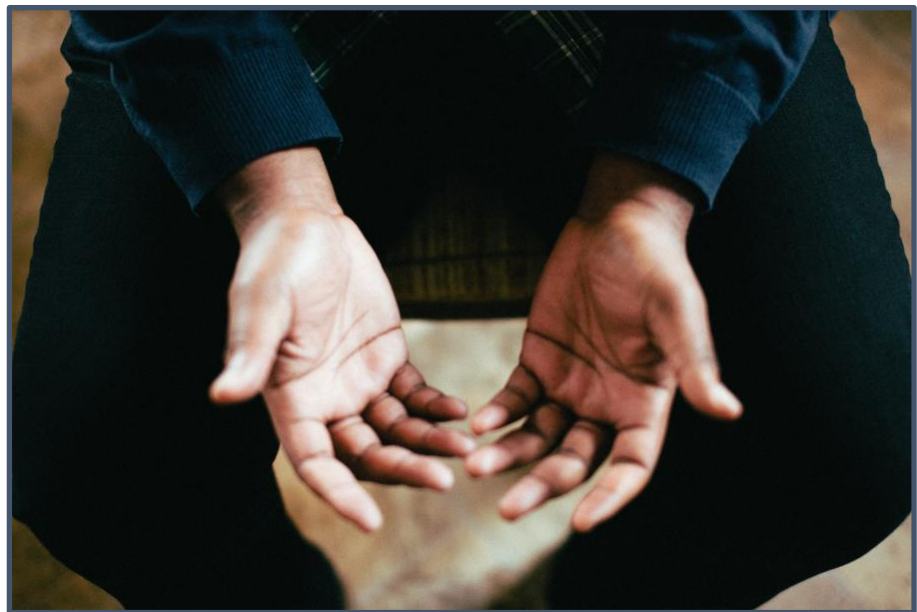
In this activity, you’ll return to the breath prayer you put together earlier today, and spend some time praying it in silence.

You can spend this time in centering prayer, or engage in a labyrinth “walk”—your choice!

Option 1: Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is wordless prayer, that—in the Christian tradition—has the goal of helping us re-center or re-focus on Christ. While we spend much of our normal day *doing*, this prayer time is an opportunity to step out of action and simply rest in Christ’s care.

Because “doing nothing” is so countercultural, this is an act of submission to God. It’s us giving up our



power (or, more accurately, the illusion that we’re in control), and saying, “Christ, I step away from my striving, my productivity, my _____, and simply come to you in humility.” Some people liken this “letting go” to Jesus’ example of obediently and humbly “emptying” himself of his power (Philippians 2).

People who regularly practice centering prayer often do this by sitting in silence with their eyes closed, for about 20 minutes, once or twice per day. While they might pray a short worded prayer (or read a Scripture passage) at the beginning and/or end of the prayer time, they spend the bulk of the time simply trying to let go of all thoughts to be more present with Jesus.

Yet letting go of all thoughts is extremely difficult, so it can be helpful to have a word or phrase you pray when you start to get distracted.

For this centering prayer time today, *use your breath prayer* as the short prayer you will repeat—silently in your mind/heart, or out loud—whenever you feel like you're getting distracted.

You might spend the time seated, with your eyes closed.

Feeling like you're distracted pretty much every second? That's totally normal, and some people say the distractions are gifts in that they offer thousands of reminders to turn back to God!

Plan to spend 10-20 minutes in this prayer activity. Twenty minutes is a good amount of time to work up to. Aim for that today if you're already used to quiet meditation. Aim for 10 minutes if this is new for you.

And remember, just like the breath prayer itself, there is nothing magical about centering prayer, and the experience likely won't feel profound to you. Just use it as a time to rest in God's care. And if you need literal rest, go ahead and let yourself fall asleep before moving on!

Option 2: Labyrinth “Walk”

What you will need:

- Labyrinth design, printed on paper (try [this one](#))

Have you heard of a prayer labyrinth? A prayer labyrinth is not a maze and it's not something magical, but it's a marked path we can walk as a way of settling our thoughts and attuning to God. Sometimes physical motion helps!



For early Christians--especially those of the Middle Ages--walking a labyrinth became a way of taking a spiritual pilgrimage without having to face the dangers, expense, and impracticalities of actually traveling to a faraway cathedral or other holy place.

For this activity, you have an opportunity to “walk” a labyrinth wherever you are!

Start your “walk” by placing your finger at the beginning of your printed labyrinth, and slowly moving along the entire path. You could race through the labyrinth very quickly as the path is not complex, but aim to go so slowly that going to the center of the labyrinth and back out takes you a total of 10-20 minutes. The rest and replenishment comes from taking it slowly.

As you “walk,” try to quiet your mind from distractions. *Use your breath prayer* as a short prayer you will repeat—silently in your mind/heart, or out loud—whenever you feel like you’re getting distracted.

When you reach the center of the labyrinth, pause for a while and wait. Ask God if there is something God wants to say to you. Maybe you will have a sense of a message from God, or a sense of God's presence, but maybe not; that is not something we can manufacture on our own. After pausing in the center, exit the labyrinth either in continued prayer with your breath prayer, in an expression of joy, or in quietness as you endeavor to simply “be still and know that [God] is God” (Psalm 46:10).

Feeling like some extra creativity? How about—before moving on—taking some time to make some homemade cinnamon rolls? You could even call them labyrinth rolls!

Here is a recipe from my (Sierra's) mother...

Buttermilk Cinnamon Rolls

Easy, yeasted cinnamon rolls. These are especially good when frosted five minutes after coming out of the oven, with a simple glaze of: 2 cups powdered sugar, 2 Tbsp. melted butter, 1 tsp. vanilla, and enough milk to make it spreadable.

Ingredients:

2 (.25 ounce) packets active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm water (110 degrees)
1-1/2 cups buttermilk
1/2 cup vegetable oil
4-1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 cup butter, melted
1-1/4 cups brown sugar
1-1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

Directions:

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. Let stand until creamy, about ten minutes. In a small saucepan, heat the buttermilk until warm to the touch.

Pour the buttermilk and oil into the yeast mixture; mix well. Combine the flour, salt and baking soda. Stir the flour mixture into the liquid, one cup at a time, until a soft dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead 20 times. Cover and let rest for 15 minutes. In a small bowl, stir together the butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon.

On a lightly floured surface, roll dough out into a large rectangle. Spread the brown sugar and butter mixture over the dough, roll up into a log, and pinch the seam to seal. Slice into one-inch pieces and place cut side up in either a lightly greased 9 x 13, or 10 x 15 baking pan. Cover and let rise for 30 minutes or cover and refrigerate overnight. If baking immediately, preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Bake in preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, until golden brown. Let stand five minutes, frost with icing, and eat! Yum!!!!

