

Living Witnesses: Praying Well

“Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, soul, strength (body)....”

Head-Centered Prayer

People who prefer head-centered knowing want to understand with their minds. They want to understand where they are in the world and in relationship, and they desire a clarity of purpose and direction about where they are going in order to feel secure and “okay.” So, logically comprehending how the pieces fit together matters.

One of the gifts of this knowing center is the ability to separate Truth from deception, so they primarily connect with what matters most through **“sight and insight”**... they tend to look outside themselves for information to figure out how things fit together, where things might be going, and how they fit into the bigger picture. Head-centered knowers can struggle with accepting affection because they have strong boundaries around their “space.” They work hard to fit in and organize their lives, so **anything which could disrupt that “fit” can be perceived as a threat.** As a result, they try not to cause disruption. And since emotions can disrupt everything, **they consider feelings logically before responding** and can be afraid or resistant to anything that is unknown... which can make relationship with an infinite, unknowable God very frightening, indeed. ☺ They may listen with interest to others’ mystical experiences... maybe even wonder what it might be like ... but find it very scary to open themselves to God in this way.

How can these folks move most naturally into the quiet, unknown depths of their true, God-created selves? Of God’s true Self? How can they be present to the presence of God... and learn to pray well?

- Resist the temptation to listen to the many interior voices demanding their attention.
- Turn their attention on the presence/voice of God within.
- Pray in simple ways which focus their “sight” and open them to “insight”... and relieve some of their fears by keeping their eyes open... such as:
 - **The Prayer of Gazing/Visio Divina**
 - Gazing on something beautiful – letting the beauty fill them with a sense of God’s goodness and security.
 - Gazing on God ... and “seeing” God gaze on them... in love.
 - **Centering prayer**... being still, safe, grounded in God right where you are.
 - **The Daily Office**... provides a simple, structured way of praying from the scriptures and Christian tradition.
 - **Lectio Divina**... praying the words of scripture and focusing on seeing the Living Word present through them.
 - **Seeing God in all things**... Watching sacred dance... or walking in Creation... or visiting a museum... seeing a spiritual movie... etc.
 - **The Spiritual Exercises**... benefitting from praying through the structured, scriptural path created by Ignatius of Loyola.

Heart-Centered Prayer

People who prefer heart-centered knowing are **sensitive**, caring for others’ needs and aware of others’ evaluations of them. **Touch and taste** are the most developed senses in the heart center, where being “touched deeply” by people and the outer world is both gift and challenge, sometimes holding too much control on them. One of the gifts of this knowing center is the ability to perceive what nurtures, and what damages, relationships. So, heart-centered folks are often concerned with interpersonal questions: Who am I with? Who helps? Who succeeds? Who is creative? Are you going to like me or not? Since they are other-centered, they can **struggle to be with themselves**, often judging themselves according to others’ expectations. They feel accepted, loved, and valuable when others “touch” them with approval.

As a result, **heart-centered knowing is extremely relational**... and can bring some anxiety because personal well-being can be dependent on others... and there can be fear of not being sensitive or responsive enough to outside expectations. Heart-centered people can feel less anxiety when alone... but since relationship is so important to their identity, they can question who they are if no one else is there. Praying in this center of knowing can be challenging if there is fear that they will find only emptiness if they go inside. So, heart-centered pray-ers need to let themselves experience being loved by God... who lives within them and fills their hearts with His love for others.

How can these folks move most naturally into the quiet, unknown depths of their true, God-created selves? Of God's true Self? How can they be present to the presence of God... and learn to pray well?

- Listen for "the still small voice of God" dwelling deep within them... calling them to leave the outer demands of others and come inside to be with Him... who loves them unconditionally.
- Be as sensitive to their own needs, feelings, desires as they are to those of others.
- Pray in simple ways which allow them to go into the scary, unexplored inner world... trusting that God will not judge them, but simply wants loving relationship with them... such as:
 - **Breath prayer**
 - **Art journaling** ... and other methods of self-expression
 - **Dialogue journaling**... writing down a conversation with God
 - **Prayer of Imagination**... praying with the scriptures by "entering" them experientially and letting God meet/relate to you personally there
 - **Praying with dreams**
 - **Self-expressive worship** rising out of an overflowing heart
 - **Listening to music that connects them emotionally** with God, themselves, others.
 - **Learning to discern** the true voice and heart of God

Gut-Centered Prayer

People who prefer gut-centered knowing are centered in the wisdom of their God-given intuition and in their bodies... so their primary way of knowing comes from the depth of their being and is more like a wordless sense deep down in their bones. As one of our members said years ago, "You just know in your knower!" 😊

As a result, gut-centered knowers move into action quickly... and their energy can be intense. They react with speed to externals, especially if they appear threatening. One of the gifts of this knowing center is the ability to perceive reality beyond appearances. Keeping the energy pent up inside is exhausting for them... so they can be tempted to release the energy in ways which disturb or confuse others. Energy and action are significant gifts and challenges in this knowing center... as is their ability to accept conflict as part of living in this world. Self-acceptance and receiving affection from others can be difficult, because in their deep knowing, they recognize that they are weak and undeserving of love in their imperfect humanness.

How can these folks move most naturally into the quiet, unknown depths of their true, God-created selves? Of God's true Self? How can they be present to the presence of God... and learn to pray well?

- Trust your intuition as a valid way of knowing... and resist the temptation to override it with the more "acceptable" ways of head or heart knowing.
- Allow God to be a "holding" presence which calms fear in the body and eases the need for self-protection.
- Pray in simple ways which allow them to know deep down in their bones that they are loved unconditionally by God as they are... and valued for the gift of wisdom that they offer... such as:
 - **The way of quiet**... prayers of **slowing and surrender**. Allowing life and people to be what they are. Radical acceptance in the present rooted in hopeful trust of God's unfolding purposes in the future. Learning to trust reality and experience God's presence in all of it.
 - **Practicing the Presence of God**... simply sitting in the still, enfolding presence of God.
 - **The Welcoming Prayer**... a way of praying to deepen relationship with God by trusting in His unfailing love
 - 1. Become aware of God with/in your "gut" and body... "sink into" the security of God's presence.
 - 2. Become aware of your body's sensations... Is there pain? Tension? Anxiety? Joy? Anger? Areas that are hot or cold? Is your energy high/fidgety... or love/lethargic?
 - 3. Don't fight or resist or try to figure it out. Just let it be what it is... and give it to God, praying:
 - ◆ I welcome all that is happening to me today because I know God is working it all together for my healing and greatest good.
 - ◆ I let go of my desire for power and control... and I give my (name the sense or feeling) to You, God... trusting in Your healing, freeing love for me. Let go... and rest in God's wordless love.
 - **Being in Creation** and allowing their Creator to ground and quiet them.
 - **Nurturing contentment and trust** that God has it ... "all is well, all is well, all manner of things will be well"