

Practical Pointers for Contemplative Prayer

Quick start for beginners

If the idea of contemplative prayer is completely new to you, I would suggest using Lectio 365. Its created by the team at 24/7 Prayer and can be accessed for free either via their website (<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>) or on your phone through their app.

These are short prayers. Morning and evening, and as of the start of this year they do a midday prayer.

You can just read them, play them out loud or there is just music. I found it odd to begin with, but it really helps you spend time with Jesus each day.

Moving on on to contemplative prayer.

When we start being alone with ourselves and not being distracted can feel overwhelming but my advice is to just get started.

I started by trying to do 5 minutes which I keep track of using a free app called insight timer (<https://insighttimer.com/>).

This has a timer that uses chimes or gongs at different points and I set it up as follows:

1. 15-second warm-up just to get settled
2. Then a chime to start a period lasting 1 minute 20 seconds. This might not seem much, but believe me it's a helpful place to start.
3. Then a chime at 3 minutes in. This showed me I was over halfway
4. Finally a chime at the end

Take your time to get past this 5 minutes and slowly increase as you feel the Lord telling you to.

If you get the day flooding in and think thoughts and feelings just acknowledge each feeling and put it down. Don't get cross if the whole time is spent like this, it's just our selves getting used to stopping. It does stop eventually, but it is normal and okay for this to happen.

Remember you are spending time with God breathing with him. You're doing it together.

Once you feel comfortable, increase your time to whatever you have time for. I generally don't increase timing intervals but perhaps you could change the 3 minutes to 8 minutes as you become more comfortable with Christ's presence and yourself.

After doing this for a couple of years now, life does sometimes get in the way and we stop doing it. However, I noticed that when I come back to it, no matter how long it's been, I'm always a bit saddened how much I've missed it.

I hope it helps.

My reading suggestions are:

Dallas Willard, The spirit of the disciplines

Jan Johnson, When the soul listens

Tyler Stanton, Praying like monks living like fools