

# MINDFULNESS, CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Richard Winter



# BIBLICAL MEDITATION

- Slow down – focus
  - No multitasking here!
- *Be still and know...* Psalm 46:10
  - Relational context with God and indwelling Spirit
- Contemplation of truth and reality shaped by Scripture
  - *This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it. Joshua 1:8*

# BIBLICAL MEDITATION

- *Blessed is the person.. His/her delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he/she **meditates** day and night.*  
Psalm 1:1-2
- *I will **meditate** on all your wondrous works... your statutes... your precepts... your law... your promise.*  
Psalm 119
- *My soul will be satisfied... my mouth will praise you... when I remember you upon my bed, and **meditate** on you in the watches of the night.* Psalm 63:5-6

# BASIC CHRISTIAN MINDFULNESS

- *Attention all! See the marvels of God!*
- *He plants flowers and trees all over the earth...*
- *Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything.*
- **Psalm 46. The Message**

# THE MINDFULNESS OF GOD

- *What is man that you are **mindful** of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Ps 8:4*
- Remember, call to mind, be concerned about...
- God's creative and contemplative mindfulness
- *The LORD hath been **mindful** of us: he will bless us; Ps 115:12*
- Jesus and the Samaritan woman – openness to her situation and no judgment
- *Being Mindful, Being Christian: A Guide to Mindful Discipleship.*  
Ed: Bretherton, Collicutt and Brickman, 2017

# OUR MINDFULNESS

- *Become like children...* (Matt 18:3)
- *I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content* (Ps 131:2)
- *Consider the lilies of the valley* (Matt 6:25-29)
- Resting in His grip and grace

# THE MIND OF CHRIST

- Romans 12:2 *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*
- Hebrews 10:16 *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their **hearts**, and write them on their **minds**."*
- *"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? **But we have the mind of Christ**."* 1 Cor 2:16

# PROTESTANT SUSPICIONS!

- Mysticism
- Catholicism
- Prayer is talking to God
- Doctrine is very important
- Use of mind in relating to God
- “Seducing spirits and doctrine of devils”







## CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICISM

Is Really Just Silly Monkey Business

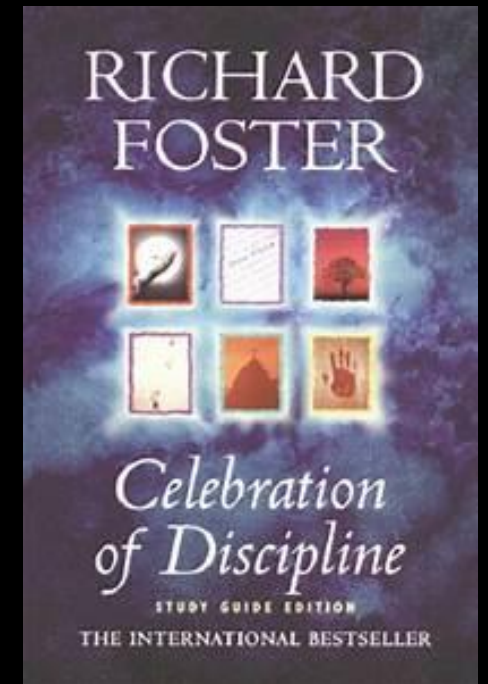
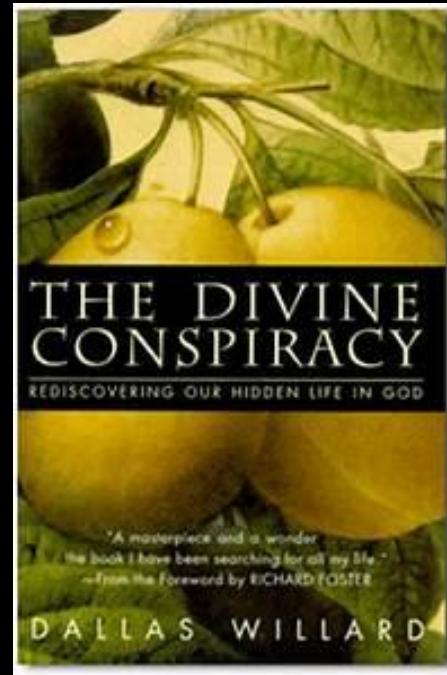
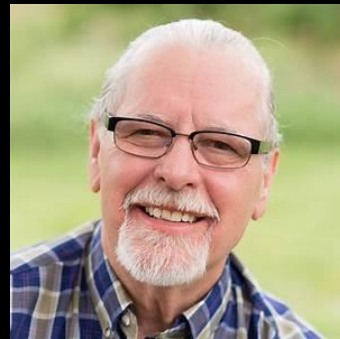


## CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY

Don't worry, it's only mysticism when the Roman Catholics do it.

# PROTESTANT CONTEMPLATIVES

- Dallas Willard
- Richard Foster
- Listening prayer
- Distraction...!
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Spiritual Formation

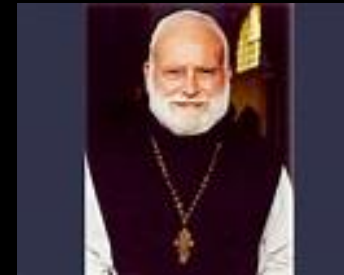


# CONTEMPLATIVE AND CENTERING PRAYER

- Thomas Merton (1915-68)



- William Menninger, Thomas Keating, and Basil Pennington (1900s)



- Richard Rohr – *Divine Dance*. Problem of dual consciousness



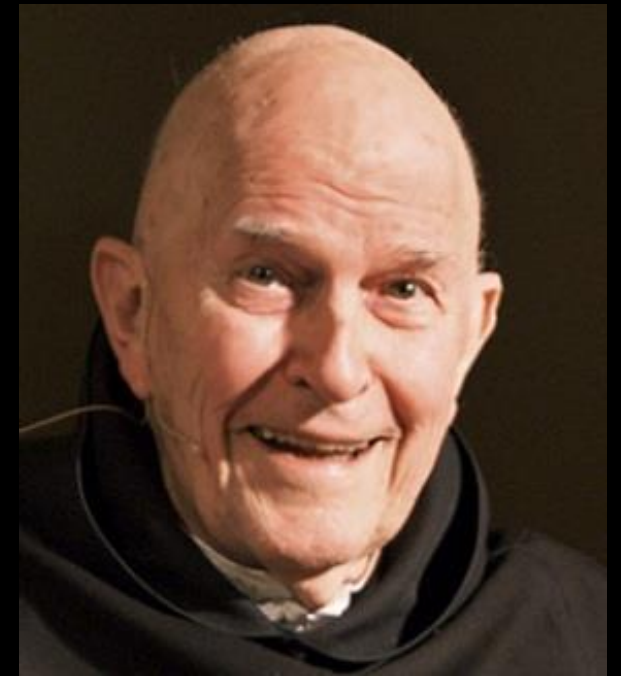
- Martin Laird *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*

# CONTEMPLATIVE AND CENTERING PRAYER

- Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington (Catholic priests) recognized a lot of common ground with Buddhism – repeating of word, “love”, “God”, “here I am” ...
- Emphasizing direct experience of God rather than knowing about him.
- Meditation takes you eventually to an Experience of Union with Christ. Stop striving to be good person, to be acceptable, to perform. Rest in his righteousness and presence.
- Encounter with God – deep sense of sin and holiness of God.
- Some: One with God/I am God. You are goodness and God cos that is your true nature.

# CENTERING AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

- 1. Quiet down and move to God dwelling in our depths. Rest in love. 20-30 mins 2x/day
- 2. Take simple word (God, love, here I am...) Consenting to God's presence and action within you. (Relationship)
- 3. Whenever we become aware of anything else, gently return to the presence by use of the prayer word. To atmosphere of interior silence. Place of refuge.
- Repeated letting go of thoughts – releasing pattern – rather than reacting!
- God inviting us to his interior life

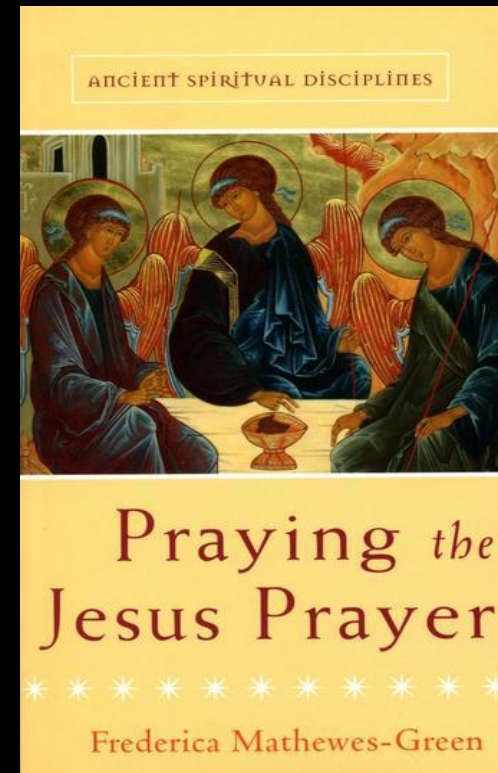


# DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

- To Egyptian desert to pursue life of self-denial and contemplation
- “You cannot attain pure prayer while entangled in material things and agitated by constant cares. For prayer means the shedding of thoughts” Evagrius Ponticus (~450BC)
- Similar Greek monastic practices from 400 to 1500. Hesychasm.

# JESUS PRAYER

- “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”
- “Lord, have mercy”
- Eastern Orthodox tradition
- Opening the heart



# THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING (14<sup>TH</sup> C)

- Based on Pseudo-Dionysius (6<sup>th</sup> Century)
- God not known through intellect but through the “darkness of unknowing”
- Words and ideas - distractions from knowing him
- Repeated utterance of single word or syllable stops rational thought
- Frees “the naked will to penetrate the cloud of unknowing in an act of perfect love”
- “For He can well be loved, but he cannot be thought. By love he can be grasped and held, but by thought, neither grasped nor held.”

Christian Classics Ethereal Library

The Cloud of Unknowing





# LECTIO DIVINA

- Benedict c. 500 AD et al (12th Century)
- 1. **Read** Scripture (several times)
- 2. **Meditate: Reflect** on Scripture - on words and phrases or entering stories
  - (Aim – not analysis but to feel God’s love, listen with the heart, allow Spirit to inspire)
- 3. **Pray: Respond** – talking to the one you love
- 4. **Contemplate: Rest** – experiencing presence/adoring God (not in words, thoughts or reason)
- 5. **Becoming the Word**. Joy of being no-self. Move beyond over-identification. Penetrated by divine life itself.



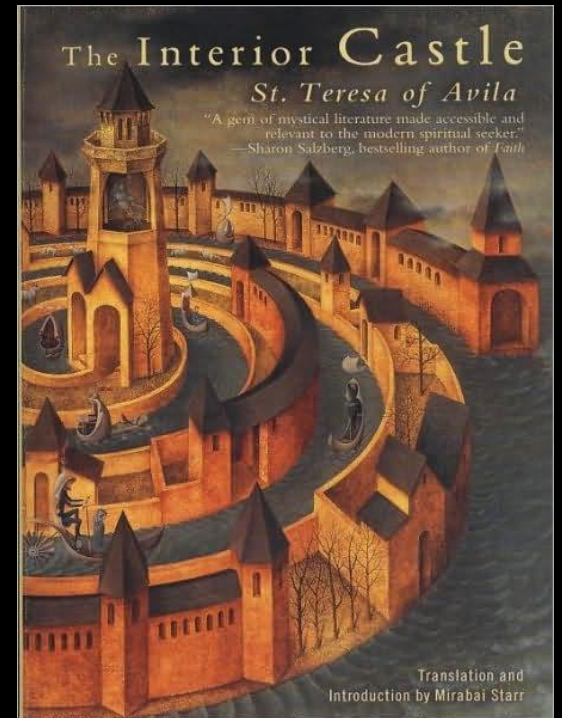
# IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA - SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

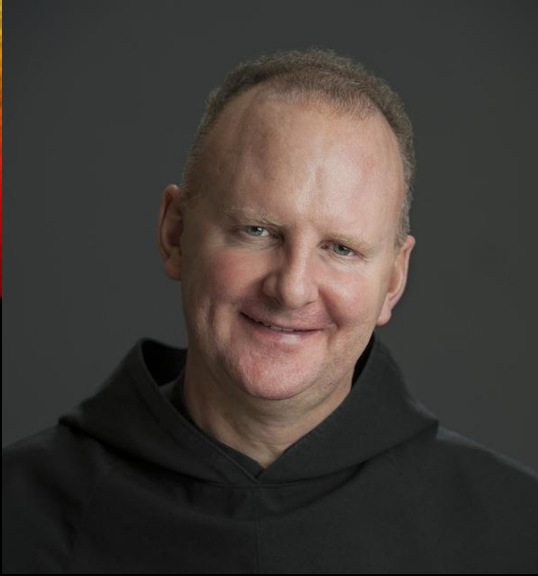
- Stillness – recalling God's presence
- Gratitude – expressing thankfulness
- Reflection – looking back on your day
- Sorrow – asking for forgiveness
- Hopefulness – resolving to grow
  
- Observe:
  - the things that control us
  - where we are over attached
  - things that hinder our response to God



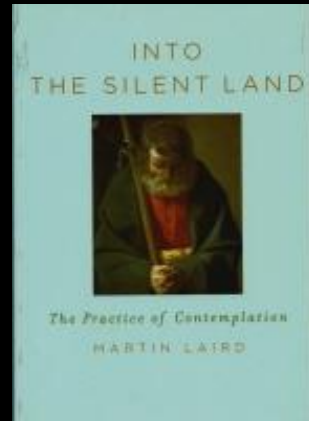
# ST TERESA OF AVILA

- Spanish Carmelite Nun 1515-82
- Much sickness
- Devotions of silence to devotions of ecstasy






# INTO THE SILENT LAND: A GUIDE TO THE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE OF CONTEMPLATION -MARTIN LAIRD



- Our greatest need is to be silent before this great God... for the only language he hears is the silent language of love." St John of the Cross
- For when the mind is brought to stillness, and all our strategies of acquisition have dropped, a deeper truth presents itself: we are and have always been one with God and we are all one in God (John 17:21)



- Our greatest need is to be silent before this great God,... for the only language he hears is the silent language of love.” St John of the Cross
- Silence of surrender
- Two skills – stillness and watchfulness/awareness
- Silence very difficult cos we become aware of inner chaos and noise
- God already the ground of our being and this helps us to be aware of it. Most ignorant of it. In the silence god simply gives himself.
- “Why do we rush about... looking for God who is here at home with us, if all we want is to be with him.?” Augustine
- Martin Laird *Into the Silent Land*

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- • When our life in God washes onto the shores of perception we see no image or shape, no holy pictures or statues, nothing for thinking minds comprehending grip. We know undeniably, like the back of our hand, the silent resounding of a great and flowing vastness that is the core of all. Words cannot express it (2 Cor 12:4). No tongue has sullied it. Such is the impenetrable silence in which we are immersed. Yet this silence cleanses the mind and unbinds the tongue. “I will sing, I will sing your praise.”
  - Martin Laird. *Into the Silent Land*

- Upholding all struggle, failure, brokenness is the Living God who embraces humanity where it stands most in need. The practice of contemplation will lead us to the door... A mature contemplative practice places us squarely before the wound of the human condition, and we learn to meet our wounds in a new way. At first this is difficult, and there is great resistance. But gradually we learn something very precious under the tutelage of these wounds. We learn a compassion for others that replaces judging, self-loathing and the compulsion to find someone else to blame. We learn a reverent joy before our wounds that replaces the condemnation of and comparison of ourselves with others that used to fuel our anxiety. We learn that the consummation of self-esteem is self-forgetful abandonment to the silence of God that gives birth to loving service to all who struggle.
- Martin Laird. *Into the Silent Land*

# MYSTICAL APOCHATIC

- No difference between me and God
- “Human personality dissolved
- Absorbed in the infinite unity of the Godhead”
- Silent
- Beyond words and ideas
- Tranquility
- Go within
- Beyond personality - One with God

# & PROPHETIC PRAYER KATAPHATIC

- God outside us
- Transcendent
- Holy
- Words
- Thoughts
- Personal Relationship
- Communication
- Union with Christ
- Awareness of not being God
- (After Heiler, *Prayer: A Study*)



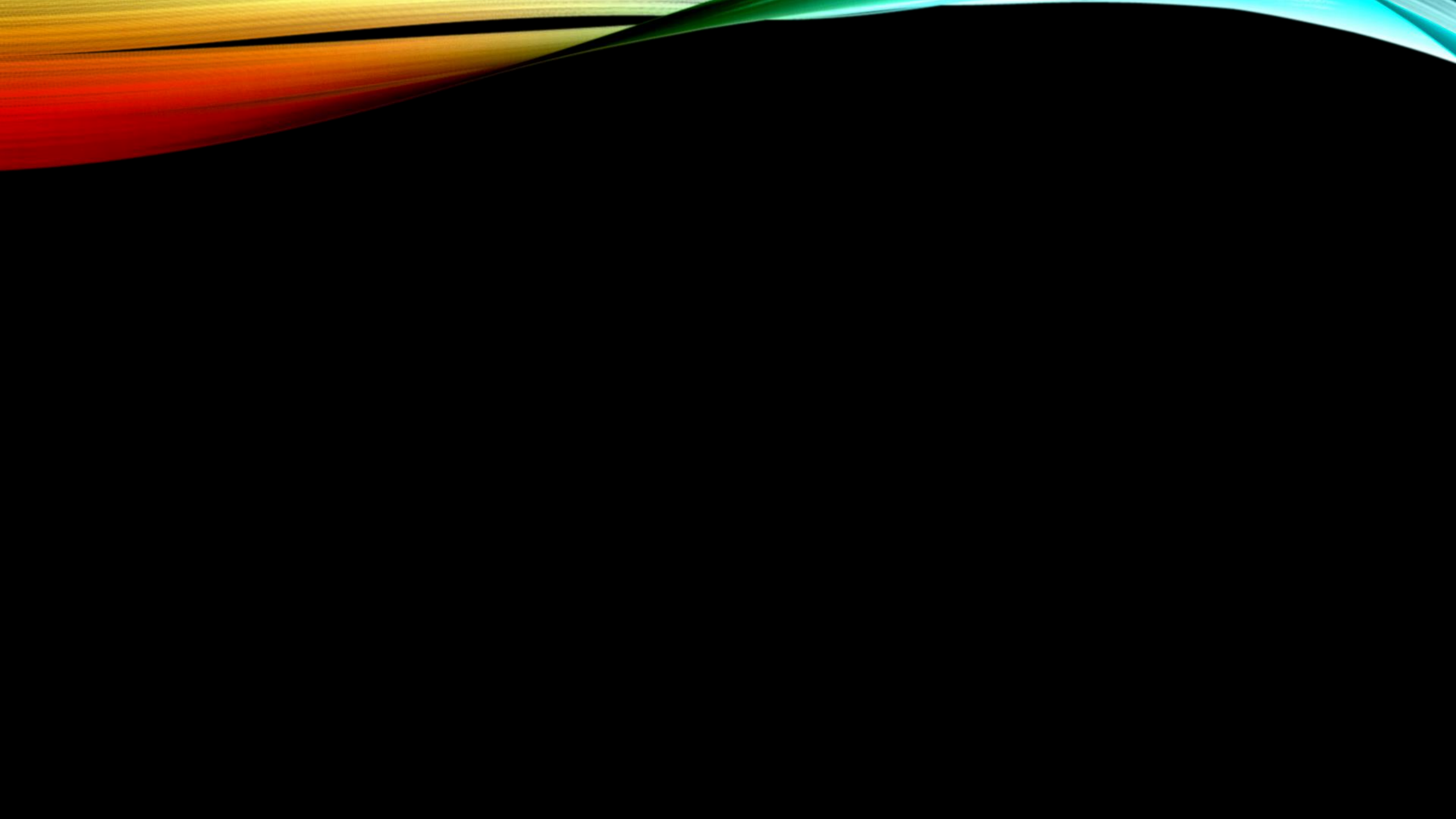
# MINDFUL PRAYER

- Meditation
- Petition
- Thanksgiving
- Confession
- Adoration
- Contemplation of God's beauty, love, glory (Ps 27:4, 63:1-3)

# MINDFUL PRAYER

- “Be still and know that I am God” Ps 46:10
- Personal encounter e.g. Jonathan Edwards
- “A place for silence” (J I Packer)
- “Personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God” T. Keller
- See Tim Keller *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*
- Need for knowledge and experience

- J Edwards: Once... anno 1737... [in] divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was **extraordinary**, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension... The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception... which continued as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity." Personal Narrative JE quoted by Tim Keller, Prayer. P 41-2




- But for those whose thinking mind has expanded into hesar mind, it is an encounter brimming over with the flow of vast, open emptiness that is the ground of all. This “no thing,” this emptiness is not an absence but a superabundance.” (11%)
- This illusion of separation is generated by the mind and is sustained by the riveting of our attention to the interior soap opera, the constant chatter of the cocktail party going on in our heads. (12%)
- For when the mind is brought to stillness, and all our strategies of acquisition have dropped, a deeper truth presents itself: we are and have always been one with God and we are all one in God (John 17:21) (13%)
- When our life in God washes onto the shores of perception we see no image or shape, no holy pictures or statues, nothing for thinking minds comprehending grip. We now undeniably, like the back of our hand, the silent resounding of a great and flowing vastness that is the core of all. Words cannot express it (2 Cor 12:4). No tongue has sullied it. Uch is the impenetrable silence in which we are immersed. Yet this silence cleanses the mind and unbinds the tongue. “I will sing, I will sing your praise.”
- Beyond words – into silence
- St Augustine speaks of a higher part of the mind reserved for contemplation of God and a lower part of the mind for reason. (19%)
- We overlook the simplest of truths: we are already one with God. (21%)

- The challenge most people face in passing through the first doorway is coping, on the one hand, with the tremendous noise going on in the head, and, on the other, with paralyzing boredom. 38%
- Practice, practice
- An ocean full and overflowing with a luminous nothing 43%
- Spaciousness, luminous vastness, a sense of the unity of all things
- We realize something more precious than any jewel. This luminous ground of God, is the ground that upholds all creation, “The love that moves the sun and the other stars” as Dante put it, the depths of our own heart, awareness itself utterly steeped in and saturated by God. Here we move into the promised land, the self-forgetful consummation in silence of our created identity, transformed from image to likeness (Gen 1:26), manifestly hidden “with Christ in God”. (Col 3:3)
- Far from lulling the reasoning mind into some dull blankness, contemplative practice sharpens reason and engenders all manner of creativity. 47%
- Thinking gets in the way of immersion in God

- Theologians should be aware that this is not a question of metaphysical blurring of Creator and creature. It is a question of the transfiguring of awareness, the consummation in silence of grace's initiative in creation, baptism and eucharist. (51%)
- Obsessive thought patterns within us generate anxiety, suffering, and the sense of restless isolation from God and others(53%)
- A mountain does not determine what sort of weather is happening but witnesses all the weather that comes and goes. The weather is our thoughts, changing moods, feelings, impressions, reactions.... All these have their place... there is a deeper core that is utterly free and vast and silent, that no thought or feeling has ever entered, yet every thought and feeling appears and disappears in it. 56%
- When we recognize that we are Mount Zion, God's holy dwelling place, and no longer suffer from the illusion that we are the weather, then we are free to let life be as it is at any given moment. 59%
- There is not a separate self who is afraid or angry or jealous. Clearly fear, anger and jealousy may be present, but we wont find anyone who is afraid, angry, jealous etc., just luminous, depthless depth gazing into luminous, depthless depth. 59%

- Loved ones die, we experience tragedy, failure. Yes in all we are the tranquil awareness that grounds and presides and is one with all, whether things are going well in life or all hell is breaking loose. (59%)
- I think St Paul would simply have called this the peace of Christ, a revelation of the baptismal fact of being in Christ. "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:19-20) Christ is the way through the door and Christ is the door (John 10:9)
- Contemplation is the way out of the great self centered psychodrama. When interior silence is discovered, compassion flows. If we deepen our inner silence, our compassion is deepened. We cannot pass through the doorways of silence without becoming part of God's embrace of all humanity in its suffering and joy... Gradually we realize that whatever it is in us that sees the mind games we play is itself free of all such mind games and is utterly silent, pure, vast, and free. When we realize we are the awareness and not eh drama, unfolding in our awareness our lives are freer, simpler, more compassionate. Fear remains frightening but we are not afraid of fear. Pain still hurts but we are not hurt by pain. (74%)



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- This is why for Christians the joyful faith in the Risen Christ never loses sight of the crucified One. God in Christ has taken into Himself the brokenness of the human condition. (75%)
  - Upholding all struggle, failure, brokenness is the Living God who embraces humanity where it stands most in need. The practice of contemplation will lead us to the door... A mature contemplative practice places us squarely before the wound of the human condition, and we learn to meet our wounds in a new way. At first this is difficult, and there is great resistance. But gradually we learn something very precious under the tutelage of these wounds. We learn a compassion for others that replaces judging, self loathing and the compulsion to find someone else to blame. We learn a reverent joy before our wounds that replaces the condemnation of and comparison of ourselves with others that used to fuel our anxiety. We learn that the consummation of self esteem is self forgetful abandonment to the silence of God that gives birth to loving service to all who struggle. (84%)

- For He can well be loved, but he cannot be thought. By love he can be grasped and held, but by thought, neither grasped nor held. And therefore, though it may be good at times to think specifically of the kindness and excellence of God, and though this may be a light and a part of contemplation, all the same, in the work of contemplation itself, it must be cast down and covered with a cloud of forgetting... and beat on that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love, and do not give up, whatever happens."
- If you want to gather all your desire into one simple word that the mind can easily retain, choose a short word rather than a long one. A one-syllable word such as "God" or "love" is best. But choose one that is meaningful to you. Then fix it in your mind so that it will remain there come what may. This word will be your defense in conflict and in peace. Use it to beat upon the cloud of darkness above you and to subdue all distractions, consigning them to the *cloud of forgetting* beneath you.
- The Cloud of Unknowing

# JAMES WILHOIT

- Exposing ourselves to the love of God where toxin of sin is broken down
- Can't change self
- Meditation on Scripture (Lectio Divina)
- Focus on your intention to be with God – sit in silence 20 mins 2x/day
- Silent prayer word that expresses openness to God
- Reverent and comfortable posture
- When thoughts come, return to prayer word
- Brief vacation from self
- Growth in mindful awareness and less reactivity
- Listening to God's love song and opening to his purifying fire
- <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BFtSSWxmrrw>

- A mountain does not determine what sort of weather is happening but witnesses all the weather that comes and goes. The weather is our thoughts, changing moods, feelings, impressions, reactions.... All these have their place... there is a deeper core that is utterly free and vast and silent, that no thought or feeling has ever entered, yet every thought and feeling appears and disappears in it.
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