

Creating a Personal Space for Spiritual Practice

Our souls and spirits are deepened and renewed as intentional time is set aside to tend them. Jesus nourished his spirit by retreating regularly into the local mountains, along the seashore, or in such secluded places as the garden of Gethsemane. In the solitude of the early morning or within the late night's quiet, he reconnected with God, restored his weary heart, and refilled the wells from which his abundant compassion flowed.

For the next twelve sessions, you are invited to similarly tend your soul and spirit by creating a space and time for intentional spiritual practice. Each session, a contemplative prayer exercise designed to deepen our compassionate connection to God, ourselves, and one another will be suggested. As with any spiritual path, healing and transformation are intensified with consistent and intentional practice. Toward that end, we invite each person to craft a regular time and space—ones that feel natural to your personal rhythms and needs—to engage these weekly spiritual practices.

Determine a Sacred Place: Reflect upon the specific places in your life and area that feel grounding to you and offer you the solitude and quiet that deepen contemplative spiritual practice. This may be a space within your house, around your workplace, at a local church or retreat center, in a garden, even within your car. Determine which place or places feel sacred and right to you as a regular space for your spiritual practice.

Personalize the Space: Reflect upon how this space might more meaningfully embody your hopes and intentions for your spiritual practice; and how it might deepen your sense of spiritual connection. What symbols speak to you—like a cross or an icon; a lit candle; sacred texts or passages of poetry; pictures of loved ones or wisdom figures; objects that remind you of other sacred encounters? What sounds are soothing and centering for you—trickling water; soft music; perhaps the silence itself? What aesthetics touch you—aromas, textures, and colors like incense, holy water, flowers, or shades of the liturgical season? Then create an intentional sacred space, perhaps a prayer altar, that feels spiritually pleasing to you.

Find a Regular Time: Take a few moments and reflect upon the rhythms and demands of your week. Be aware of what you long to receive through these nine months; and of the honest limits of your life and schedule. Then, sensing what truly resonates with your longings and your limits, set aside particular times through the week, perhaps daily, that you will devote to spiritual practice. For these set aside times, determine how long feels right to practice (perhaps as short as 15 minutes, or as long as an hour on those days that allow it).

Protect your Time for Practice: Reflect on how you might best protect and deepen the moments in which you are engaged in spiritual practice. You might consider turning off your phone; locking the door; covenanting with your loved ones that this is time sacred to you; setting an alarm so you can focus without the distraction of losing track of time.

Entering into Each Practice Time: Some people find that it deepens their experience when they enter into each prayer time with intentionality. As you prepare to enter your practice space at any given time, you might take a moment and name your desire or intention for that prayer time; imagine that the sacred is within your practice space waiting to welcome and receive you; and perform some physical gesture—a simple bow, for example, the sign of the cross, wrapping oneself in a prayer shawl, or simply taking a deep breath—as a way of honoring the sacredness of this space and time.