

Christian Prayer 1c

Using a mantra to become centred, still before God

We are body and spirit; spirit and body

We are spirit and flesh, but at times we can quite neglect one or other of these aspects of ourselves. Sometimes – and perhaps especially when we are being ‘religious’ – we can forget we have bodies, are embodied spirit. At other times our bodies can dominate, and we forget our spiritual dimension.

Religious traditions across the world make use of simple techniques of attending to our bodies to integrate our whole self and enter into a meditative state. These techniques are available to Christians too, so that we can experience our spirit at home in our God-given bodies as we seek to be ourselves before the living and loving God.

A Mantra exercise

What does it say? The word that is near you, in your mouth and in your heart? If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (cf Romans 10.8-9)

Before the exercise

It will be helpful to introduce the students to a series of simple phrases before beginning the prayer. And to invite them to choose one. A selection is included on a PowerPoint.

What is a Mantra?

In some meditation techniques the mantra is held as a secret, and supposed to be particular to each person. Yet for the Christian what is important is not the mantra, but the living Lord. We are free to use any suitable words as a mantra, and to allow the silent recitation of the words of the mantra to quieten us, centre us, and open us to be more present and attentive to God.

Choosing a Mantra

The following are suggested, but you can easily form your own from a favourite passage of scripture.

- Be still / and know I am God
- Jesus, Son of God / have mercy on me
- Lord Jesus, / help me
- Maranatha / Come Lord Jesus
- Je / sus
- My Lord/ my God

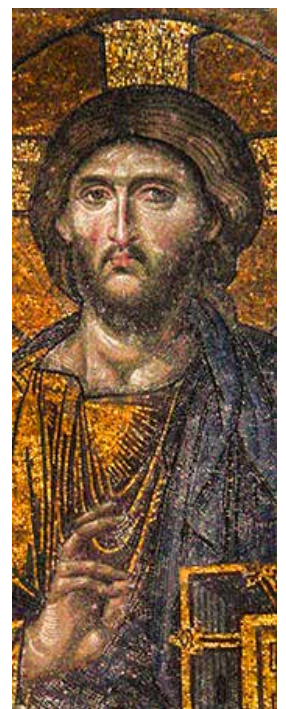
Using a Mantra

During the exercise we say the first phrase as we breathe in, and the second phrase when we breathe out. You might focus on the words and what they mean, but you don't need to. What we are trying to do is simply become quiet before God, using the mantra and our breathing to centre us for the time of prayer, helping us to avoid distraction from our world and even ourselves,

We do this not to escape from the world or ourselves, but with God to become more ourselves for living well in the world.

When students have chosen their mantra, you are ready to begin your time of quiet stillness before God.

PTO



A Mantra exercise ★

Beginning the exercise

What does it say? The word that is near you, in your mouth and in your heart? If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (cf Romans 10.8-9)

- Make yourself comfortable: legs uncrossed; feet flat on the floor; back straight; arms by our sides; hands comfortable on our laps...
- Know where you are: listen to the noises around you, acknowledge them and, as it were, set them aside...
- Notice your breathing: breathing in and breathing out. Not changing how deeply you breathe, or the rhythm of your breathing, just noticing it...
- Breathing in, and breathing out...
- Breathing in, and breathing out...
- Then call your mantra to mind.
- Say the first part as you breathe in, and the second as you breathe out.
- The first as you breathe in, the second as you breathe out.
- Breathing in, and breathing out...
- Breathing in, and breathing out...
- Breathing in, on the first phrase, and breathing out on the second.
- And we continue our quiet meditation for three minutes (*or longer if you choose*), and at the end a bell will ring...
- For now, breathing in, on the first phrase, and breathing out on the second..

Bringing the exercise to a close.

People can sometimes be very relaxed because of this technique. Bring the exercise to a close with a gentle announcement.

- You might end the whole exercise by leading people in praying the 'Glory be'.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

- ★ The exercise is written as a script. You can read it to a class. But leave lots of pauses, to allow people to get comfortable, to notice how they are feeling etc. Maybe allow 10 seconds or more after each bullet point.

Two PowerPoint presentations have been prepared to assist you.

- **THE FIRST** introduces the idea of praying with a mantra, and suggests mantras that students might use.
- **THE SECOND** gives another brief introduction to praying with a mantra and includes a three minute prayer time.