

MEDITATIVE OR LISTENING PRAYER

Definition Of Meditative Or Listening Prayer:

Can you give a simple, straightforward definition of meditative prayer?

"Prayer in general is the interactive communication that transpires between God and ourselves. Meditative prayer in particular is the listening side of this communication. We are bringing both mind and heart into the presence of God and then we listen to the Lord."

—Richard Foster, Sanctuary of the Soul

Richard Foster shares his experiences:

Can you share a little about your own experience of meditative prayer?

"Right now I am trying something a bit new for me, and to do it I must first find a Bible I have not marked up! I take a short psalm with no more than fifteen verses. Psalm 29 is a good example. I do three readings of the psalm. The first time, I read the psalm out loud to myself, after which I am still for a few moments. On my second reading, I use a felt marking pen and highlight any verses or phrases that speak to my condition. I do this with a prayerful heart trusting that the Lord will focus my attention on what I really need. After the reading I again become completely quiet for a few moments. On the third reading I actually do not read the whole psalm but only the passages I have highlighted on the second reading. As I read for the third time, a single verse or phrase often will stand out and that is the passage to which I give my attention. In the case of Psalm 29 the phrase I felt drawn to was "worship the LORD in holy splendor" (29:2). I jot this verse or phrase on a note card so I can carry it with me throughout the day. But I am not done. Having turned my attention to a particular passage, I sit quietly, listening to the Lord. What am I doing? I am waiting upon the Lord. I am attending to the Lord. I am beholding the Lord. The reading part of my meditation may have taken fifteen minutes, and now the waiting in a listening silence will take perhaps another fifteen minutes. Often I have a cup of coffee as I listen, as with good friends there does not need to be any words. Still, I seek to be attentive to any teaching or experience the Lord wants to bring to me." —Richard Foster, Sanctuary of the Soul.