

## Getting Started

**1. Identify a sacred space.** Explore all the possibilities for a time and a physical space in which you can be alone on a regular basis. Preferably you can identify a spot in your home, outdoors, or a comfortable place in your office that helps you to settle into a quiet and receptive state of being. Consider whether there are any spiritual symbols or artifacts that you would like to bring into this space to help you be present to the spiritual reality of God's presence with you. Feel free to experiment with what works and what doesn't until you find the time and place that work for you. Once you have identified them, you may want to communicate with family members or roommates they can honour the time by not interrupting you and honour the space by letting it remain set apart for your times alone with God.

**2. Begin with a modest goal,** especially if silence is a new practice for you. Ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes of time spent in actual silence is realistic, depending on your personality, pace of life, reliance on words and activity, etc. You can always increase your time as your capacity for silence increases. The amount of time is not nearly as important as the regularity of the practice.

**3. Settle into a comfortable yet alert position in your body.** Settle into a position in your body in which you are not distracted by physical discomfort, but also one that will not lend itself to falling asleep! One excellent posture for beginning is to sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair with back and shoulders straight but also relaxed and open, both feet flat on the floor, hands in a comfortable position in your lap. Over time, you may choose other prayer postures (see next point), but this is a good place to start.

**4. Ask God to give you a simple prayer that expresses your openness and desire for God.** This prayer is nothing more than a word or a phrase that "gathers up" your desire for God and helps you to stay present with it. You can enter into the silence by praying this prayer several times as a way of beginning and also as a way of dealing with distractions. Distractions are inevitable, so when they come, simply let them go by like clouds floating across the sky. Help yourself return to your prayerful intent by repeating the prayer you have chosen. You can use a different prayer phrase every day, or you can use the same one for as long as it captures what is most true about your heart's desire for God. Be aware of what body posture helps to express your spiritual desire, and use this along with your prayer word or phrase.

**5. Close your time in silence with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence with you, or pray the Lord's Prayer.** Decide ahead of time whether you want to use a timer to let you know the time is up or just want to glance at the clock every so often.

**6. Resist the urge to judge yourself or your experiences in silence.** The purpose of time spent in silence is just to be with God in whatever state you are and to let him be in control. Trust that whatever your time in silence was like, it was exactly as it should be.