

Contemplative Outreach

Spiritual Journey with Thomas Keating

Part I Tape 5(A)



The Auditory or Visual Image or Symbol

Use a general but not detailed visual image – a loving look.

Use an auditory image or symbol.

Use a sensory image or symbol – following one's breath.

With eyes open, gaze unseeing at a point in front of you.

We may use it a lot at the start but when peaceful, calm, or quiet, allow that.

We are at That Lower Level

"We are not just speaking of centering our attention; we're more concerned with moving towards the center of our being which is God, the God of pure faith, and we're leaving behind the peripheral or surface attention of consciousness that is the ordinary consciousness of life."

You do not think about the content of the sacred word or symbol, however holy.

It Really is an Interruption

Centering is a prayer that embraces everyone and all of creation so you need never feel that you should have prayed instead in some other way for someone or something.

We should not, however, during centering stay with an emotional reaction to any perception, thought or feeling.

If you feel peaceful and calm that may be a good sign that the emotions have experienced some necessary healing and become quieter.

There is Going to Be a Lot of Starting Over

Constant need to return to the sacred word requires us to exercise faith, trust and love of God.

Deep spiritual experience may make distractions actually feel painful.

It may also result in spiritual insight but this means we should return to the sacred word and trust that the insight will be available to us after our prayer.

You Suddenly Solve the Mystery of the Holy Trinity

Theological insight should similarly be shelved as we return to the sacred word.

John of the Cross tells us that visions etc are instant and overwhelming and short of that anything else is just an ego trip.

DIVINE UNION = SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Centering "...directs itself like an arrow to the heart of the problem of human transformation; the resistance in us to trust God completely or the resistance to let go of our props...shoring up our fragile egos..."