

# Contemplation



In Scripture, the word for 'contemplate' is *behold*, which means *to gaze upon*. King David wrote that the one thing He wanted more than anything was to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord (Psalm 27:4). Our part in contemplation is to seek to do

just that. This is one of the more difficult spiritual disciplines because it requires that we stop trying to perform, trying to learn, and trying to do, and instead, simply 'be' in God's presence, loving Him and then allowing Him to love us back. All of the other things we have done — study, meditate, memorize etc. — can be catalysts to contemplation. (It is helpful to do contemplation at the close of one of these other disciplines). We deeply need this, for through it we *experience* God's love, or as Paul wrote in Romans 1:5, God pours His love out in our hearts. The following is a four step process, also taken from my book, *The Soul at Rest: a Journey into Contemplative Prayer*.

**1 PROTECT YOUR MIND:** Because you will be waiting in silence, you want to consciously set your mind on the Lord, affirming His presence and acknowledging that He is Lord over this time. Be on the alert to any schemes of Satan to distract or discourage you, or any lies he sends your way. Renounce his lies and replace them with what you have learned from His Word. Resist Him as Scripture instructs us to do in 1 Peter 5:8.

**2 PURIFY YOUR HEART:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything that would stand in the way of you connecting with God intimately during this time. See the rooms of your heart being emptied of all grime and clutter and filled with the light of God's presence. Thank Him that in Christ, you are already pure, remembering His promise that the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8).

**3 Praise your Redeemer:** Fixing your eyes on the beauty of Christ can keep you from striving or becoming self-focused. You may begin with praise and thanksgiving for all God has done for you. You might worship Him for the truths you've learned about His love. You might consider the cross; looking carefully at the freedom it bought you. As you hold Christ's sufferings close, see His agony, reflect on your unworthiness and contemplate what your life would be like without Him. At some point what God has done will fold into the fabric of who He is. The very nature of God will grip you -- you will begin to grasp that because He *is* perfect love, He cannot do anything but love you perfectly.

**4 Present yourself:** Now gently turn your heart to Christ who lives within you by His Spirit, seeing yourself as one warmly received by Him. Remain still, gently releasing any need to speak or act. Let a hush settle as you wait upon God. Listen, not so much for words, but for a holy sense of God's closeness to cover you. If your mind wanders or you feel restless, repeat simple phrases of adoration to the Lord. (I love you Lord, You are all I need, I adore You etc.) When your heart is at rest before Christ and you feel His presence, ask Him to speak, to reveal His love in some tangible way. It might be a word, a memory, a Scripture verse, a truth, or just an impression that He is with you, loving you. However long you spend here, the goal is to move between being loved by God and offering Him your love in return as you contemplate (gaze upon) His beauty.