

Week 5 Meditative Practice “Practicing Repentance”

Reverend Emily Meyer, Director of [The Ministry Lab](http://www.uccmn.org), invites you to wonder through breathing and contemplation. Please note, this content is also available as an audio recording on the website: www.uccmn.org.

3 Wondering Questions

- *Where do I have power to share God’s love?*
- *What things have I said or done - to myself or others - that were hurtful?*
- *How can I make space every day to think and pray about asking for forgiveness and offering forgiveness?*

Tips:

- You may listen (audio file on www.uccmn.org, or read text included here).
- Non-judgmentalism is key: This is called a “practice” because it is never “perfect”.
- This practice contains two moments of silence introduced by the phrase, “Continue to breathe...” Recorded silences last one minute. You can lengthen this time by pushing pause; push play when you are ready to continue.
- And, don’t be afraid to stretch the silences: extended time deepens our connection with the Divine and develops patience, compassion, & attention spans!
- This practice concludes with an invitation to journal and reflect. Both are highly beneficial. You may want to have paper and writing/drawing materials handy.
- If circumstances prevent all forms of reflection, please be kind to yourself and others by moving slowly from the practice back into “normal” life: the jump from silence to normal-volume life can be jarring.
- Take your time. Breathe. And be...

Preparation

The audio file does not include these preparations.

Work out the Wiggles: Do a squiggly dance, air-hula hoop, or simple jumping jacks to work out the kinks and sitting of the day.

Stretch: When you’re ready, stretch high to the sky, then flop to touch your toes/ankles/calves/the floor - whatever is accessible. Roll up slowly, roll the shoulders up and back and down, and bring this tall posture into your seated position.

Sit: Take a seat! Sit up tall, with both feet on the floor, knees above ankles, hips behind knees, shoulders over hips, hands resting in the lap, chin slightly tucked: tall, yet relaxed. Some participants may want to sit cross-legged on the floor. This is another great option!

Eyes: If you are comfortable doing so, close your eyes to help eliminate distractions and allow your focus to be within.

Meditation

Naming Our Intent

- ~ Today we practice repentance.
- ~ To “repent” means to rethink our actions, or inactions; to have a change of heart.
- ~ Begin to notice your breath. Long deep breaths, in and out.
- ~ Let your focus be on your feet.
- ~ Tilt your head down and be fully aware of where each foot is on the floor.
- ~ Notice only your feet.
- ~ Begin to walk towards the wall.
- ~ Inhale and exhale with each step:
- ~ Inhale, take a small step, exhale.
- ~ Continue to focus only on your feet.
- ~ Inhale, take a small step, exhale.
- ~ Inhale, take a small step, exhale.

Continue taking intentional steps forward, until you reach the wall; and with each step, breathe... Take as long as you like - from 1-3 minutes or more.

Practice

When you get to the wall, pause. Let your head rest against the wall for a moment and feel how solid it is.

Notice how you cannot get through the wall. That you have reached a dead end.

- ~ Pay attention to this feeling of being blocked for a moment.

The word repent literally means, “to turn around; to make a 180 degree turn”.

- ~ I invite you to turn around completely, to face the direction from which you have come.

- ~ Tilt your head up, so you can look around.
- ~ Begin to move forward, one small step at a time.
- ~ Inhale, take a step, exhale.
- ~ Notice the open space around you.
- ~ Inhale, take a step, exhale.

Pay attention to obstacles or trip hazards: furniture, people, things on the floor.

- ~ Inhale, take a step, exhale.
- ~ Continue to walk slowly back into the space, and with each step, breathe...

Take as long as you like - from 1-3 minutes or more.

Rest

I invite you to wiggle your toes and fingers; gently roll your head or shoulders...

Take a few deep breaths: in and out... And rest for a moment.

Take as long as you like - from 10-30 seconds or more.

Reflect

Keeping all of your writing or drawing in one book gives you something to look back on. This can help you see where God has been in your life and in the world, and might help you notice God in new ways. It's a way to write or draw your own personal story of God.

When we repent, we declare our intention to stop walking in selfish, ego-centric ways, and instead, turn to walk in God's freeing, open ways of love and care for God, creation and neighbor.

You might reflect today by simply drawing a U-turn sign or U-doodles and wondering about relationships or places in your life where a U-turn would be helpful.

Or, you might create a word cloud of the feelings you experienced: how it felt to walk forward, looking only at your feet and how it felt to return, with eyes up and able to see the space around you.

Or, consider what pains you were able to avoid when you were free to look around you. When you were able to be aware of the people, furniture and other surroundings, was it easier to not walk into them?

Or, you might reflect on the people or places you have not been noticing, if your focus has been too much on yourself. What would a U-turn look like in these relationships? How might a U-turn renew these relationships?

Take as long as participants need to record their reflections in their journal.

Share

You might conclude your reflection by sharing aloud a prayer thanking God for the blessings you receive through your community (and naming a few of them), asking God to bless your community, and seeking guidance on how you can be part of God's blessing for your community.

You might conclude your reflection by sharing from your drawing or writing. At the conclusion of sharing, you might discuss this week's Wondering Questions:

- 1. Where do I have power to share God's love?*
- 2. What things have I said or done - to myself or others - that were hurtful?*
- 3. How can I make space every day to think and pray about asking for forgiveness and offering forgiveness?*

Bless

Thank you for taking this time to practice repentance. A simple practice like this, every day, can develop tools of grace, forgiveness, confidence, and compassion. I hope that you find this to be true.

Blessed be.



Photo credit: Rodion Kutsaev