

## ***Use This Well***

Here is a brief introduction to some prayer/meditation practices for you to use at home and in the field. Some of these ideas may be familiar to you, others brand new. All of them have brought strength, hope and comfort into people's lives.

As a Soldier, you have a lot on your mind and more than enough to do. So, don't try to add all of these practices at once. Instead.....

- Try centering prayer when you need to reconnect with the Source and develop a closer relationship with God.
- Read scripture in a new way when you have some quiet time and want to fill it with words of assurance.
- Use a finger labyrinth when you'd like to take a brief journey towards God.

If you have any questions about these or other prayer practices, contact a Chaplain.

**Religious Support Office  
CARE Center**  
*(Chaplaincy Academy for Religious Education)*



# ***Fuel for the Fight***

# ***Rest for the Weary***



## ***Remember Your Buddies***

Right up front... remember that you are not alone in your quest for fuel and rest. Soldiers from the earliest times to the present day have taken time out to get reconnected to the Source of strength, hope and comfort..... God!

Listen to what some Soldiers today have had to say about the need to re-connect with God. Do you hear yourself in these words?

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*“Though you like to pretend that you have control, and though we train and do as much as we can to mitigate a lot of factors, ultimately, whether somebody lives or dies is out of our hands, and that’s definitely a huge call to come back to that side of the faith, to be able to just trust completely that things will work out.”*

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*“I discovered that within a few trials, I had to rely more on God.”*

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*“How would I live with myself after I’d done terrible things or been forced by the enemy to do terrible things?”*



You may find it helpful to recite Scripture as you follow the labyrinth path. It may help you to focus. A good passage to try is Psalm 16:11.

***“You show me the path of life.  
In your presence there is joy.”***

## ***Use a Finger Labyrinth***

If what is going on inside of you is deeper than words, you may want to use a finger labyrinth instead of praying or reading.

A labyrinth is a path of prayer with many turns or circuits. It is different from a maze because a labyrinth has no dead ends. Instead it has a single path that leads to a center. Think of using this finger labyrinth as following a path towards oneness with God.

***The Path In*** Begin by quieting your mind. Take a few deep, cleansing breaths. When you are ready to begin, set your finger at the opening of the labyrinth and begin to move it slowly along the path...no rush. Continue to breathe slowly and deeply as your finger moves.

***At the Center*** When your finger reaches the center take some time to focus on your mind, body and spirit. What has been happening to you along the path? Keep your finger resting quietly in the center..

***The Path Out*** When the time feels right, begin to exit the labyrinth. Follow your same path in reverse. Keep your pace slow and steady. Don't forget to breathe. Once your finger leaves the labyrinth at the spot where it entered, your journey is complete. Take any new insights about yourself back into your daily life.

## ***HAVE YOUR OWN SAY!***

How would you say it?

Use the rest of this page to describe a time that you:

- felt particularly close to God.
- called out to God in some way for some reason.
- found strength, hope and/or comfort in God.
- felt a strong need for God's presence in your life

***Amen.***

## ***Good if you can get it ..... Sacred Space, Time and Things***

***Sacred:*** set apart and dedicated to one purpose

**Make Sacred Space:** Just about anywhere you find yourself, you can make a sacred space for yourself. Look around for a place that you can set apart for refueling and resting. It could be a corner in your room or the foot of your bed. If possible, have a place to go where you can say, "In this place I can be me."

**Gather Sacred Things:** If you like being hands-on, then gathering a few sacred things for your sacred space may be in order. Remember, there is nothing magical about things in themselves, but some well-chosen things can help you to develop a stronger spiritual life. Here are some ideas for things that you can gather and use.

**Book**—Keep God's Word handy for reference.

**Candle**—Set up a candle in your sacred space. Let it be a reminder of God's presence with you.

**Rock**—Place a rock in your pocket as a reminder of something important, or make a pile of rocks to commemorate a special event.

**Water**—Dip your hands in a bowl of water as an act of cleansing.

**Find Sacred Time:** What is it about time? There never seems to be enough of it! Now that you have a sacred space and you've gathered some sacred things, remember that any time can be God time. Even if you only set aside a moment, or a few minutes every day, taking time with God is worth it.

### Get Started

Find yourself a quiet place apart and get as comfortable as you can. Choose one of these two Psalms and follow the four steps of a spiritual reading. Remember to take your time and read slowly.

#### ***Psalm 121***

I lift up my eyes to the hills -  
From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;  
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;  
The Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in  
From this time on and forevermore. \*

#### ***Psalm 139:1-6***

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You discern my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O Lord, you know it completely.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is so high that I cannot attain it. \*



\* from the New Revised Standard Version

## ***Read Scripture in a New Way***

One of the oldest, most tried and true ways of reading scripture can bring you new insights. It's called *lectio divina* which means spiritual reading. The steps to spiritual reading are easy, but they can change your life. You can use any passage of scripture, but if you don't know where to start, try the Psalms.

### **Step 1: READ**

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Listen for a word or phrase or sentence that really speaks to you. Begin to repeat that word/phrase/sentence over and over until it begins to settle into your heart. *Be silent for a minute or two.*

### **Step 2: REFLECT**

Read the passage again slowly. This time, as you read, begin to reflect on how these words connect with you and your life. What touches you? What is meaningful to you? *Be silent for a minute or two.*

### **Step 3: RESPOND**

Read the passage again. This time, as you read, listen for your own words rising up as a prayer to God in response to what you have been reading. *Be silent for a minute or two.*

### **Step 4: REST**

Read the passage a final time and rest in the words. Allow God to enter your rest. *Be silent for three to five minutes.*

## ***Take Quick Steps***

### ***Pray Palms Up, Palms Down***

**Step 1:** Place your palms face down as a sign of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Whatever it is that is bothering you or weighing you down, silently turn it over to God.

**Step 2:** Turn your palms face up as a sign of your desire to receive God's blessing. Ask for whatever you think you need.

**Step 3:** End with a time of inner silence. Let God be with you, let God love you.

### ***Think on These Things***

"...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Philippians 4:8  
from the New Revised Standard Version

As Soldiers you see all of the good, the bad, and the ugly that there is to see. Dark thoughts can begin to enter your head and take a foothold. A quick way to fight back is to "think on these things." Whenever you need to shed a little light on your life, take a few moments to identify someone or something around you that is honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent and/or worthy of praise. If you can't identify any of these qualities anywhere, you may want to think about how you could be one of these things for someone else.

## ***Center on Prayer***

Soldiers are action-oriented people. It's all about "doing the mission." The challenge of centering prayer is that it is less about **DOING** something and more about **BEING** somewhere, being in the presence of God.

Centering prayer is about the process of opening your mind and heart to God who is beyond all thought and feeling. Practicing this prayer form may help you to break through cycles of compulsive thinking and/or painful feeling into a new and refreshing relationship with God.

### **Step 1: CHOOSE A CENTERING WORD**

Choose and plan to use a word of 1-2 syllables throughout your prayer practice. Suggestions include: God, Peace, Trust, Be Still, Let Go ..... you get the idea.

### **Step 2: SETTLE DOWN & BREATHE**

Sit comfortably, but make sure to keep your back straight. This will help you to breathe freely. Close your eyes as a sign that you are letting go and letting God begin to move in your mind and heart. Slowly, in your mind, begin to speak your centering word over and over again. Silently speaking this word is your sign that you desire to enter the presence of God and stay there for awhile. Breathe in the presence of God. Breathe out with God into the world around you.



### **Step 3: RE-FOCUS AS NECESSARY**

As thoughts, feelings, images, plans, memories, etc. come into your mind ..... and they will ..... calmly return to your centering word. The more you practice centering prayer, the easier this will become.

### **Step 4: STAY IN SILENCE**

At the end of your prayer practice stay quiet for another minute or two. Rest in the presence of God. Just **BE**. Then you can go back to all of your doing, **REFRESHED**.



### ***Try the Jesus Prayer***

Throughout history Christians have found comfort and strength in the name of Jesus. Somewhere along the way **The Jesus Prayer** developed as a way to focus on His name. When you are in a tight spot, the Jesus Prayer may be just what you need to help you focus, calm your soul, and summon the strength to carry on. Here is the prayer. Slowly repeat the words as you breathe in and breathe out.

*(breathe in)*

Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.

*(breathe out)*

Have mercy on me.