

## Praying the Jesus Prayer

### I. Purposes of this session:

- A. To experience a contemplative prayer form from the Eastern Tradition.
- B. To share what we experience with each other.
- C. To practice leading one of those prayer practices.

### II. Suggested Procedure

#### A. Opening - (5-10 minutes)

- 1. **Light the candle** to symbolize God's continual and constant creative and loving presence.
- 2. **Open with a prayer** of thanks, awe, petition - whatever is on your heart for your group.

#### B. One way to lead a group in the Jesus Prayer

1. **Introduction:** Pretend (and ask them to pretend with you) that this is a group of people who, as far as you know, have never heard about or experienced the "Jesus Prayer."

a. *Give a little background about the history of the prayer* (drawing on sources such as *The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way*, available in various editions and translations) *and how it "works"* - it brings our intention and attention to God and allows God to be present in and to us in ways unencumbered by our words and petitions.

b. *Introduce the form of the prayer you will use* (probably the briefer form, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," but if you choose, you can use more or all of the longer version, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.") Say it several times. Ask them to say it with you, slowly.

#### 2. Instructions

a. *Indicate that they may choose to walk, stand, kneel or sit during the prayer time.* Those who walk may walk either in the room (if that is possible in your space), in an adjoining hallway or outdoors. Give them a moment or two to think about what they would like to do, and locate spaces around the room where those who wish might stand or. Some may choose to remain seated in the circle.

b. *Ask those who will be walking to do it as quietly as possible* so as not to disturb others *and to avoid eye contact with one another as they walk*, and to return after 10 minutes of walking.

c. *For those remaining in the room*, you will end the praying time with "Amen" after 10 minutes.

d. *Remind them that if they notice their mind wandering*, to gently draw their attention back to God through the words, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," (or the form the group has chosen).

e. *Say that you will begin by praying the prayer aloud together slowly 3 times and then continue praying silently.* Those who are walking can begin to walk when the silent prayer begins.

#### 3. Allow participants 10 minutes for prayer

#### 4. End the prayer with "Amen."

a. *Wait for the standers, kneelers and walkers to get seated.*

b. *Invite them to share what their experience with the prayer was.* There's no right or wrong "experience" - there's just what "is."