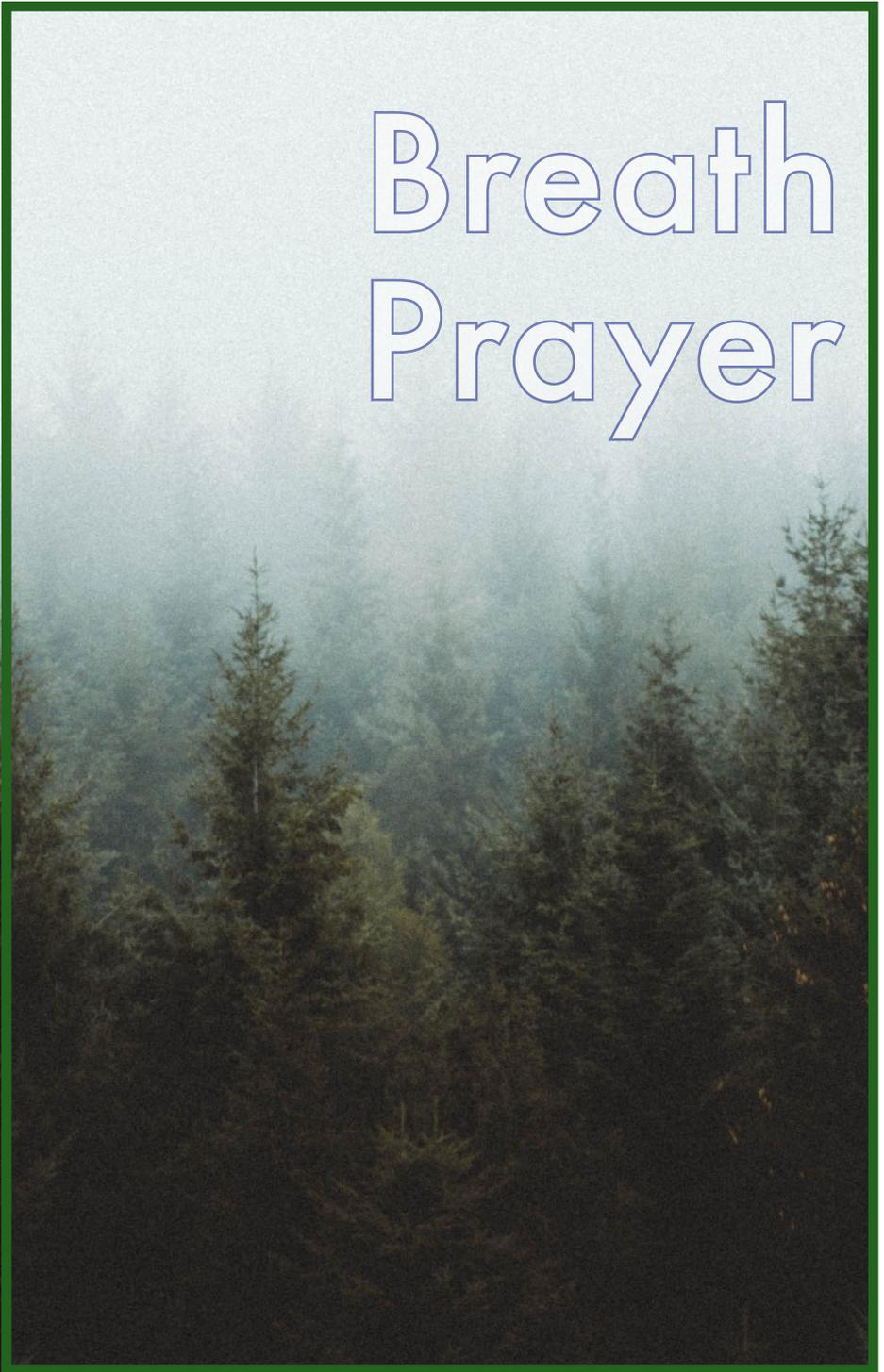


Breath Prayer



— Breath Prayer —

*The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground
and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath** of life,
and the man became a living being.*

— Genesis 2:7 —

*The Spirit of God has made me;
the **breath** of the Almighty gives me life.*

— Job 33:4 —

*He himself gives everyone
life and **breath**.*

— Acts 17:25 —

Breath is life. We cannot live without breathing, and each breath is a gift from God that forever connects us to him. He is the breath of our physical lives and the oxygen of our souls. We need his life and guidance every day, all day. God designed our body and our mind to work together to house our soul, and deep breathing is an important part of bringing nourishment to all three.

Everyone knows that breathing is a source of physical energy. But more and more people are beginning to understand how the practice of slow, deep breathing can also be a source of relaxation ... sometimes even a sigh of relief.

Deep breathing can lower our resting blood pressure, reduce anxiety, lessen tension, and relieve stress when we feel anxious or overwhelmed. Deep breathing brings more oxygen to the thinking brain. It slows us down and can bring calm to our nervous system. Medical studies indicate that it can relax muscle tension and promote a relaxation response that can help improve our overall mental and physical health. Every deep breath we take, along with all the beneficial results, is simply tapping into the process God began as he “breathed into [our] nostrils the breath of life; and [we] became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

DEFINITION OF BREATH PRAYER:

A Breath Prayer is a form of contemplative prayer linked to the rhythms of deep breathing. It is a short prayer that can be prayed in the space of one breath. Usually, it combines a name for God with a single request. It has the advantage of putting into a single phrase the deepest desire of your heart and praying that desire. By providing a constant reminder that God is present and living in us, Breath Prayers can help our thoughts, feelings, and behavior to flow from an ongoing dialogue with God. By developing a

rhythm of turning to God at any time of the day, Breath Prayers can help us develop a constant, inner, unbroken, perpetual habit of prayer — “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Unlike Eastern meditation, which focuses on emptying the mind, Breath Prayer fills the mind. It reframes the mind, bringing it back to an awareness of God. In fact, scripture says that it is God’s breath that gives us both “*life*” and “*understanding*.”

*Moses and Aaron fell face down and cried out,
“O God, the God who gives **breath** to all living things.”*

— Numbers 16:22 —

*The God who gives **breath** to all living things.*

— Numbers 27:16 —

*It is the spirit in a person, the **breath** of the Almighty,
that gives them understanding.*

— Job 32:8 —

*I will put **breath** in you, and you will come to life.*

Then you will know that I am the LORD.

— Ezekiel 37:5-6 —

BIBLICAL ROOTS FOR BREATH PRAYER:

Through the centuries Christians have tried to follow Paul’s words to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess 5:17) by mixing breathing with praying. The roots for early breath praying can be found in the Psalms, where a single repeated phrase can remind us of the entire Psalm. For example, “*The Lord is my shepherd*” recalls the power and emotion of the entire Twenty-Third Psalm.

The Old Testament book of Psalms is filled with short prayers:

“Give ear to my words, O LORD” (5:1) KJV

“In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust” (31:1) KJV

“Have mercy on me, O God” (51:1) NIV

“Hear my prayer, O God” (54:2) NIV

“Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer” (61:1) NIV

“Search me, O God, and know my heart” (139:23) KJV

“Lord, Hear my prayer” (143:1) NIV

In the New Testament story of Jesus' death, among his last words were short prayers to his Father. When the violent mob surrounded him he prayed, *"Father, forgive them"* (Luke 23:34). Even his last breath was a prayer, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"* (Luke 23:46). Notice in these circumstances that Jesus' prayers were not uttered in the peaceful quiet of a weekend retreat, but in the violent noise of his own crucifixion

INHALE AND EXHALE:

There is a powerful connection between breathing and praying.

Breathing can help to reset and restore the systems in our body, reducing anxiety and relieving stress. Prayer can help to reset and restore our spirit, bringing us back to a faithful awareness of God's presence.

Breathing follows a rhythm, a pattern of drawing in and then releasing air. Prayer also has a rhythm, a progression of inhaling God's forgiveness and power and then exhaling our doubts and fears.

THE PRACTICE OF BREATH PRAYER:

Begin by quietly pondering the nearness of God ...

1. As you breathe deeply in, silently express any name of God that is special to you.
2. Momentarily pause at the "top" of your breath.
3. As you breathe out, silently state a deep desire of your heart.

As an example, consider what has been called the *"Jesus Prayer,"* often attributed to early church father, John Chrysostom (347-407 AD). This short Breath Prayer combines *"God, have mercy on me, a sinner"* (Luke 18:13) with *"Son of David, have mercy on me"* (Luke 18:39).

1. Breathe In — "Lord Jesus ...
2. Momentarily pause
3. Breathe Out — "...have mercy on me."

Breath Prayers can go with you as you move from place to place, from moment to moment, peacefully praying and rehearsing God's nearness several times throughout your day.

BREATH PRAYERS FROM SCRIPTURE:

<p>From Luke 18:38 Inhale — <i>“Lord Jesus”</i> Exhale — <i>“Have mercy on me”</i></p>	<p>From James 1:17, 21 Inhale — <i>“Father of light”</i> Exhale — <i>“Plant your Word in my heart”</i></p>
<p>From 1 Samuel 3:9 Inhale — <i>“Speak Lord”</i> Exhale — <i>“I am listening”</i></p>	<p>From 2 Peter 1:3 Inhale — <i>“God of divine power”</i> Exhale — <i>“Give me all that I need today”</i></p>
<p>From Psalm 121:2 Inhale — <i>“My help”</i> Exhale — <i>“Comes from the Lord”</i></p>	<p>From Romans 12:1, 18 Inhale — <i>“God of mercy”</i> Exhale — <i>“Help me live at peace with everyone”</i></p>
<p>From Isaiah 6:8 Inhale — <i>“Here I am”</i> Exhale — <i>“Send me”</i></p>	<p>From Psalm 56:3 Inhale — <i>“When I fear”</i> Exhale — <i>“I trust you Lord”</i></p>
<p>From Romans 12:1-2 Inhale — <i>“God of mercy”</i> Exhale — <i>“Renew my mind”</i></p>	<p>From Luke 22:42 Inhale — <i>“Not my will”</i> Exhale — <i>“But yours be done”</i></p>
<p>From Galatians 4:6 Inhale — <i>“Abba, Father”</i> Exhale — <i>“Thank you for adopting me”</i></p>	<p>From Matthew 6:10 Inhale — <i>“Your kingdom come”</i> Exhale — <i>“Your will be done”</i></p>
<p>From Mark 12:30-31 Inhale — <i>“As I love you Lord”</i> Exhale — <i>“Help me to love my neighbor”</i></p>	<p>From Psalm 46:10 Inhale — <i>“When I am still”</i> Exhale — <i>“I know you are God”</i></p>

PRAYING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT:

— Galatians 5:22-23 —

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

INHALE

<pause>

EXHALE

<i>My Holy Father</i>	...	<i>Fill me with your Spirit's Fruit</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's love</i>	...	<i>and let go of my indifference</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's joy</i>	...	<i>and let go of my sorrow</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's peace</i>	...	<i>and let go of my worry</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's patience</i>	...	<i>and let go of my busyness</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's kindness</i>	...	<i>and let go of my hostility</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's goodness</i>	...	<i>and let go of my unkindness</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's faithfulness</i>	...	<i>and let go of my hypocrisy</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's gentleness</i>	...	<i>and let go of my harshness</i>
<i>I accept Your Spirit's self-control</i>	...	<i>and let go of my disorder</i>

Often Breath Prayers will be practiced in quiet places where there are no distractions, and you can find calm stillness before God. But you will also find great strength in offering Breath Prayers anytime as you move through your day — getting ready in the morning, driving in the car, before a meeting, while waiting in line, or anticipating a difficult moment when you will need a calm spirit. Breath Prayer can help you to practice God's presence wherever you are.

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