

Breath Prayer

Overview: This is an ancient prayer practice that can help us maintain a constant state of prayer that can become as simple as breathing. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Breath prayers can be a way to actually practice this.

Time: 10-12 min.

Purpose: Establish a means of simple and ready access to communion with God no matter where you are or what state you are in.

Facilitator Notes:

For those who may have difficulty hearing from the Lord or coming up with the actual words for the prayer, help them find one pick a verse or preset prayer that they can connect with.

Exercise:

- ◆ Encourage them to take a minute or two just to sit quietly and connect with the Lord.
- ◆ Now have them work with the Lord to see if they can create one for themselves.
- ◆ First, start with their name—what people who know and love you would call you.
- ◆ Second, answer this question: What do you want from the Lord? Maybe a single word or phrase ("peace," "strength," "faith," "to know truth," "feel Your love," etc.
- ◆ Next, connect the word or phrase with the most comfortable way of addressing the Lord: Blessed Savior, Abba, Immanuel, Holy Father, Gracious Lord, etc.
- ◆ Now work with these three elements to create a prayer. Your breath prayer should be an even number of syllables/words, ideally 6-10: "Jill, your Abba is with you", "John, I give you My peace." "Sara, it is finished."
- ◆ If they have difficulty with coming up with a more personal one, allow them to choose a phrase from a favorite verse or from a list of prayers below:
 - ◆ God, make haste to help me.
 - ◆ Lord Jesus, have mercy.
 - ◆ [name], abide in my love.
 - ◆ My God and my everything.
 - ◆ My Jesus, mercy.
 - ◆ I belong to you, Lord.
 - ◆ Bless the Lord, oh my soul.
 - ◆ Open my heart to your love.
 - ◆ Lord, I give myself to you.
 - ◆ My Lord and my God.
 - ◆ Lord, increase my faith.
 - ◆ Not my will but yours be done.
 - ◆ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.
 - ◆ Jesus, my light and my love.
 - ◆ May my being praise you, Lord.
 - ◆ Our help is in the name of the Lord.
 - ◆ Holy Spirit, pray in me.
 - ◆ Lord, do with me what You will.
- ◆ After you have chosen or created a breath prayer, make a goal to remain in God's abiding presence as you begin saying your prayer. Ponder the meaning and beauty of the words you are saying.
- ◆ Slowly say the first part of the prayer as you breathe in. Then slowly say the next part of the prayer as you exhale until you complete the phrase. Then start with the beginning of your prayer with your next breath. There is no hurry or rush. Allow your normal resting breathing to dictate the pace of the prayer.
- ◆ Encourage them to practice their breath prayer frequently and caution them from beating themselves up because they keep getting distracted which is very common.

*Adapted from Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*; *The Way of Pilgrimage: An Adventure in Spiritual Formation for the Next Generation: Leader's Guide*; and Richard Foster's *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*.