

Breath Prayer

In Hebrew the words for breath and spirit are the same word, *ruach*. A breath prayer, when used over time, can help us to experience what it means in Romans 8:26-27 for “the Spirit to pray in us”. It is a short prayer that can be said or thought in a single breath.

Many spiritual traditions have found that being attentive to our breathing is a helpful way to become centered or focused on our inner world. Breathing attentively, at an easy, regular pace, slows us down and calms our rushing mind and body.

Breathing in and out is symbolic of the filling and emptying of our lives.
Joyce Rupp

Here is a way to develop your own breath prayer:

- Imagine Jesus standing in front of you, asking you, “What do you want me to do for you?” Go deep inside yourself and allow your response to emerge from that place of profound hope and prayer. If several things emerge, try to identify the root desire beneath all the others.
- Now identify a name that you normally use for God in prayer. It might be *Lord, Jesus, Almighty One, Spirit of God, Most Holy God*. Find your name for the divine being.
- Combine your desire with your name for God in a single short phrase that flows easily in your mind. You may need to experiment with phrasing to find a comfortable rhythm.
- Sit quietly and repeat your prayer while you move. Note how the prayer shapes your perceptions. Allow the prayer to accompany the rhythm of your walking and your breathing.
- This prayer can be carried with you through the day. It is a good companion for solitary activities, like doing chores, frustrating times like sitting in traffic jams, and rhythmic activities like running, swimming or bicycling.

Based on “Soul Feast” by Marjorie J. Thompson

Sample breath prayers:

Holy Spirit...fill me

Give me strength...O Christ

Father...show me your love

Teach me patience...gracious God

My God...and my All (Saint Francis)

Come...Lord Jesus!

Strengthen me...encourage me

Hold me...in your love

I receive...I give

Healing God...I hope in you