



ATTENTIVENESS: SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

Practice Lab Week #1 Breath Prayer Guide

Overview:

Breath prayer is an ancient form of prayer that is easily adaptable to various situations and circumstances. The simplicity in the practice is where it derives its profundity. At its core, breath prayer is simply a way to meditate on either a verse, name of God, or simple truth of who God is by syncing your prayer with the cadence of your breathing.

Breath prayer is a simple way to use a natural process of your body to engage your mind and heart on the Word of God. These quiet and reflective "prayers of the heart" help to overcome distraction during prayer, allowing you to more easily commune with God. It is less about technique and more about focus. Its aim is not a perfect formula but rather to do what Paul said in Colossians 3, "let the message of Christ dwell among you richly..."

Prayer Guide - The Kyrie:

The most famous breath prayer that has been used for centuries by the Desert Fathers and Mothers has become known as the "Kyrie" (from the Greek word "Lord") or the "Jesus Prayer." For the sake of this guide we will use this as our guide prayer. See below for examples of other verses/phrases that can be used in breath prayer. The Jesus prayer in its entirety is very simply...

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.
Have mercy on me, a sinner.*

1. Slow down and get comfortable

With your feet flat on the ground and your back straight, sit in a comfortable position. Set aside anything that is in your hands and slow down your mind and your heart. Take a few deep breaths and, as you do, begin to pay attention to your breathing. In doing this, remember that God is the very reason you have breath in your lungs.

2. Inhale - "Lord Jesus Christ"

As you take a deep breath in, pray these words...
Lord Jesus Christ

3. Exhale - "Son of God"

As you exhale slowly, pray these words...
Son of God

4. Inhale - "Have mercy on me"

Take another slow long breath in, pray these words...

Have mercy on me

5. Exhale - "a sinner"

Exhale slowly again, as you do pray these words...

a sinner

6. Repeat

Continue to pray this prayer using the cadence of your breath for the duration of the time you have set aside. As you move through your time, dwelling richly on this simple prayer, try switching out the final phrase "a sinner" with "your beloved child" as a way to reflect on God's gracious welcome of you.

Additional Options for Breath Prayer:

Any name, verse, truth, derived from scripture could be used in a breath prayer. So feel free to be creative with how you engage your time of prayer to commune with God. (Below are 10 examples taken from Sarah Bessey.)

Matthew 11:28-30

Inhale - Humble and gentle One,

Exhale - You are rest for my soul

2 Corinthians 12.9

Inhale - Your grace

Exhale - is enough for me.

John 15

Inhale - True Vine and Gardener

Exhale - I abide in You.

Psalms 23

Inhale - I will not be afraid

Exhale - For you are with me

Romans 8.38-39

Inhale - Nothing can separate me,

Exhale - from the love of God.

Psalms 46.1

Inhale - You are our refuge

Exhale - and our strength.

Psalms 46.10

Inhale - Be still

Exhale - and know you are God.

Philippians 4.7

Inhale - Peace of Christ

Exhale - guard my heart and mind.

Matthew 6.10

Inhale - On earth

Exhale - as it is in heaven.

Psalms 91.1

Inhale - I find rest

Exhale - in Your shelter.