

Breath Prayer

A contemporary version of the Jesus 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.



Here's 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 the phrase gently in your mind for several minutes. Allow the prayer to take on the shape of your breathing so that the words accompany your every breath.

Take a walk, repeating 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 exercises like running, swimming or bicycling.

Sample breath prayers include:

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! Maranatha !

*This method is included in Marjorie Thompson's book *Soul Feast*, Westminster John Knox Press, p. 48.