

breath prayer

Breath Prayer: Personal and Community Prayers
by The Rev. Betsey Heavner

Breath Prayer takes the continuous and mechanical motions of our breathing and incorporates words of prayer to create an act that is useful, especially whenever our normal prayer lives are interrupted. In fact, this prayer pattern offers remedies for our anxious minds and bodies on two fronts: we call upon God's attention to our need, while at the same time, we calm our bodies with the rhythm of breathing.

practice a breath prayer:

Breath Prayers

A helpful way to become centered and focused

Breathe out doubt; breathe in assurance

Breathe out worry; breathe in peace of mind

Breathe out hatred; breathe in love

Breathe out war; breathe in peace

Breathe out turmoil; breathe in harmony

Breathe out insecurity; breathe in God's presence

Breathe out emptiness; breathe in fulfillment

Breathe out selfishness; breathe in generosity

Breathe out darkness; breathe in God's everlasting light

develop a personal breath prayer:

- **What is the name you most often use for God?** Some suggestions include "Holy God", "Creator of All Things", "Holy One", "God".
- **What is your petition or prayer at this time?** Some examples include "forgive me", "guide me", "thank you", "heal me or my friend", "have mercy on me".
- **Put the two together:** "Holy God, forgive me." When calling upon the Lord, breathe in. As you state your request, exhale.

silence

We live in such a noisy world with phones and tablets and all kinds of electronics. Taking time to be silent and enjoying God's presence can take practice. Start with short periods, maybe only 30 seconds or a minute of silent time with God and gradually add on to that.

silence

Sit comfortably, set the timer for 30 seconds, when you start the timer be silent until the timer rings. Focus on God during your silence. If your mind wanders, bring your focus back to God until the timer rings.

Try it again for 30 seconds or increase the time to 60 seconds.

creative expression

God gives us all gifts of creativity; and we can pray through our writing, our drawing or coloring, our music, our movements. While you are at this station write, draw, work with Playdough, or create something with Legos while you pray. Instead of stating it as a traditional prayer, say it as though you are having a conversation with God.

writing

Write your prayer as though you are writing a letter to God. Use the ACTS acronym to create your prayer.

Adoration - Give God praise and honor.

Confession - Tell God what is heavy on your heart.

Thanksgiving - Let God know what you're grateful for.

Supplication - Pray for the needs of others.

drawing

Use the markers, colored pencils, and other items to draw a picture or an abstract image. Pick colors that you feel match your prayer topic.

playdough

While praying, use the PlayDough to create a form that relates to your prayer. Or simply squish the PlayDough however you want.

legos

Build with the Legos while you are saying your prayer. When saying your prayer, add a Lego piece to the item you are building with each prayer request.

body prayer

A body prayer is simply a prayer involving movement or physical action. We often use our bodies during prayer in church when we close our eyes, fold our hands, and bow our heads. God made our bodies and we can use our bodies when we pray. Try the following body prayer that can be used as an individual or as a group.

body prayer

Placing both hands on top of the head, pray out loud:

God be in my head and in my understanding.

Placing both hands over the eyes, pray out loud:

God be in my eyes and in my seeing.

Placing both hands over the ears, pray out loud:

God be in my ears and in my hearing.

Placing both hands over the mouth, pray out loud:

God be in my mouth and in my speaking.

Placing both hands over the heart, pray out loud:

God be in my heart and in my feeling.

Placing both hands on the legs, pray out loud:

God be in my legs and in my moving.

Placing open hands one on top of the other in front of the body, pray out loud:

God be in my hands and in my touching.

Placing both arms at the side of the body, hands open and turning outward, offering our life to God, pray out loud:

God be in my life and in my journeying. Amen

the examen

This is the traditional Ignatian practice of reviewing the day to find God's presence in it. There are many simple expressions of this prayer practice that people use in family settings (happy, sad, sorry; thumbs up or thumbs down; roses and thorns; high and lows; etc.) It is a wonderful practice for your family, but you can also make it a part of your personal prayers at the end of each day.

the examen - one way

Here is a suggestion on doing **the examen** prayer.

- ❑ Remember the moments that went well and all of the gifts you have today.
- ❑ Request the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
- ❑ Review the day...start with what happened first thing this morning and continue on through the day chronologically.
- ❑ Repent of any mistakes or failures.
- ❑ Resolve, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow as your best self.

the examen - another way

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these shortcomings. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for protection and help. Ask for wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God.

sharing gifts

Take time to think about how you can be generous and the various ways you can be generous. A couple of things to keep in mind...when you receive money (through allowance, birthday gift, or earned) will you keep all of the money for yourself, put some of it into savings, and donate some? Giving of your time can also be a way of sharing your gifts. Think of ways you can serve others.

think about your gifts

- ☐ Can you mow a lawn or scoop snow for someone who would have difficulty with those tasks?
- ☐ Could you read with someone who is younger than you?
- ☐ Do you have a hobby you could teach someone?
- ☐ Would you like to visit the elderly at a nursing home?
- ☐ Is there a park or green space near your home that could use some tidying such as picking up trash?
- ☐ If you enjoy working with animals, would you want to volunteer at an animal shelter?

where do you see needs?

- ☐ What are some other ideas for helping the community? Take a few moments to think about it and write your ideas below.

devotional

There are thousands of books that provide a daily scripture verse along with a written reflection. Some are intended for adults, but others are specifically for youth.

devotional

- ☐ **Select a reading** from one of the books. It doesn't have to be for today...pick any day.
- ☐ If there is a scripture reading that goes along with the devotional, **find it in the Bible** and read it.
- ☐ Then **read the devotional**.
- ☐ To end this practice, **say a prayer** related to the devotional.

consider this

- ☐ Is this something you would enjoy doing each day or a few times a week?
- ☐ Are there apps that have a daily devotional?
- ☐ What would be a benefit to this practice?

prayer beads

Protestant prayer beads are a tool to help with focused prayer.

creation strand

- ❑ **Hold the strand** in your hand.
- ❑ Read through the **Seven Days of Creation** touching each bead as you read the word that goes with that bead.
- ❑ Start over again and give thanks for something that is

prayer beads

- ❑ Read the following brochure sections
 - What do the beads mean?
 - How do you use Prayer Beads?
- ❑ Hold the prayer beads and say **The Full Circle Prayer**