

# Breath Prayers

## Introduction

Have you ever thought about your breathing? Probably not that often but we should because in an average day an active adult can take up to 50 000 breathes. And would you believe a one year old can take up to 86 000 breathes? We do it automatically but every breath we take is an absolute miracle, a gift from God.

Through breathing, your lungs take oxygen into your red blood cells, which then flow through the rest of your body, through your pulmonary veins to your heart. Your heart then pumps the oxygenated blood through the systemic arteries to deliver that oxygen throughout your body. And all that's just from taking one breathe, inhaling. When we exhale, the carbon dioxide your body doesn't need is released into your bloodstream to the lungs and then breathed out.

Breathing keeps us alive and healthy. With the popularity of mindfulness, the importance of concentrating on our breathing to help us be in the moment has resurfaced. But religious people, including Jews and Christians have known this a long time. In the beginning in the book of Genesis we read God; *formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a human being* (Genesis 2:7). We believe that humanity was created to breathe, to take in the breath that comes from God to truly live. And what's more in John's gospel we read that on Easter day when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples, he spoke to them, reassured their fears then breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). God has made us as human beings with his living breath as the resurrected Jesus lives with and in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. In using our breathe in conjunction with prayer we are centring ourselves on the Triune God.

This meditative practice can help develop stillness and peace in us in anxious times. That is the purpose of these breath prayers for the Holy Spirit to slow us down and bless us with an awareness of God's presence. Remember prayer is not a work we do to bring us closer to God but a gift that Jesus teaches us. One branch of Christianity, the Orthodox Church has prayed through the centuries what's called the Jesus Prayer. A short prayer that links biblical phrases with our breathing; *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me (a sinner)*. Praying names for God, images of God, promises from the Bible are powerful ways of centring ourselves in anxious times. Over the course of the term, we will be praying a number of breath prayers that link biblical passages with this centring activity. We will be using these breath prayers each week as a meditative, mindfulness activity to encourage us to slow down, be aware of the present moment, breathe, and take deep into our lungs, hearts, and minds, God's Word and promises.

Thank you to Steph Maher from LEQ for this idea which originally comes from a Sarah Bessey article called "Breath Prayers for anxious times". <https://sarahbessey.substack.com/p/breath-prayers-for-anxious-times?fbclid=IwAR2eBoeEgOV5ABYGEYlxF16S9fBmkaTBxxXAA3B94rhi6Bw4Mpalkq5VX8g>

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## Week 1 – Romans 8:38-39

*(Slide 3)*

This first breath prayer we are using this term is from the New Testament letter of Romans chapter 8, verses 38-39. This is a great chapter in which Paul the Apostle reminds us that in times of suffering and distress, God is for us, not against us, his love can never be divided from us.

In these breath prayers remember we are using our breath as we inhale saying this Word of God silently to ourselves and as we exhale with the corresponding Word.

*(Slide 4)*

Let's pray this breath prayer now.

I invite you to get your body in a comfortable position, as we become still, quiet and focus on our breathing.

Let's take a deep breath to practice now; inhale....Feel your lungs fill with air and exhale....let that breathe out again.

As you look at this verse on the screen lets speak out aloud the text in bold;

Inhale: **Nothing can separate me,**

Exhale: **from the love of God.**

Now we are going to pray this verse three times as we say the first line silently to ourselves as we inhale and the second line as we exhale.

Let's inhale saying this Word of God silently...and then exhale.

Let's do that again a second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 5)*

May God bless you with a deep awareness of the depth of his love for you today. Amen.

## Week 2 - 2 Corinthians 12:9

*(Slide 6)*

Remember what we did last week, we are using our breath as we inhale, saying a Word of God silently to ourselves, and as we exhale, saying the corresponding Word of God.

This second breath prayer is from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians where we are reminded that God's power is made perfect in weakness. The cross of Christ shows us that God's grace is enough for us.

*(Slide 7)*

Let's be still now, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now....in....and out....Feel your lungs feel with air and then let that breathe out again.

Let's turn our eyes to the verse on the screen from Second Corinthians and read out aloud the text in bold;

Inhale: **Your grace**

Exhale: **is enough for me.**

Let's pray this Word of God now by saying silently to yourself the first line as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale...

Let's do that again a second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 8)*

May the grace of Jesus be enough for you today. Amen.

## Week 3 - 1 John

*(Slide 9)*

A third breath prayer for this week.

Remember, we are using our breath as we inhale saying a Word of God silently to ourselves and as we exhale and say the corresponding Word of God.

This prayer is from the New Testament letter of John. A letter that is known for its theme of love, God's love which is perfected in Jesus. God's sacrificial love drives our fear, the fear that can easily grow in us in uncertain times.

*(Slide 10)*

Let's be still now and tap into that love and peace that comes from God, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs inhale with air and then let that breathe out again.

Let's look at this verse on the screen from First John and say the bold text out aloud;

Inhale: **There is no fear**

Exhale: **in your Love.**

We pray the first line silently to ourselves as we inhale....then the second line as we exhale...

A second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

Lastly a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 11)*

May God's Spirit of love drive out all fear in you today. Amen.

## **Week 4 - Psalm 91:1**

*(Slide 12)*

A breath prayer for week four.

Another opportunity for God's word and promises to be breathed into our hearts, minds and bodies as we go about the simple act of slowing down and focusing on our breathing.

This fourth prayer is from the Old Testament book of Psalms. The psalms which has been called the prayer book of the Bible. Psalm 91 points us to our need for, and the location where, we find true rest; in the sheltering presence of our gracious God.

*(Slide 13)*

Let's be still, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs inhale with air and then let that breathe out again.

As you open your eyes look at this verse on the screen from Psalm 91 and say out aloud;

**Inhale: I find rest**

**Exhale: in Your shelter.**

Let's pray the first line silently as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale...

Let's do that again a second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 14)*

May the Lord God shelter you and give you rest in all you do today. Amen.

## Week 5 - Psalm 23

*(Slide 15)*

A breath prayer for week five.

An opportunity again for us to be still, centre ourselves on God's word and pray using our breath.

Like last week, this prayer is from the prayerbook of the Bible, the Psalms. From one of the most well-known verses of the Bible, Psalm 23. A psalm of absolute trust in the Good Shepherd who is with us, guiding and leading us in the midst of all the fears life throws up at us.

*(Slide 16)*

I invite you to get your body in a comfortable position, as you become quiet, still and focus on your breathing.

Take a deep breath now in....out....Feel your lungs inhale with air and then exhale....

As you open your eyes look at this verse from Psalm 23 and read out aloud the parts in bold;

Inhale: **I will not be afraid**

Exhale: **for You are with me.**

You are invited to pray the first phrase as you inhale....then the second as you exhale...

Let's do that a second time, inhale with this Word of God....then exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 17)*

May Jesus the Good Shepherd bless you with his presence today. Amen.

## Week 6 - Psalm 46:10

*(Slide 18)*

Let's pray another one of these breath prayers now for week six.

Remember, we are using our breathe as we inhale saying a Word of God silently to ourselves and as we exhale and say the corresponding Word.

As you look at this verse you will see it is from another psalm. Psalm 46 was significant to Martin Luther because it spoke into a world in crisis and uproar. Where there is great change, turmoil and trouble Luther believed we can hold onto a God who is our refuge and strength, a God who does hold us in Christ.

*(Slide 19)*

Let's be still, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we quiet ourselves and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs inhale with air and then let that breathe out again....

As you open your eyes look at this verse on the screen from Psalm 46 and say out aloud the bits in bold;

Inhale: **Be still**

Exhale: **and know you are God.**

We pray to ourselves the first line silently as we inhale....then the second line as we exhale...

Let's do that again a second time, inhale with these words....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 20)*

Lord, bless us with stillness today, and deep knowledge that you are our God. Amen.

## **Week 7 Matthew 6:10**

*(Slide 21)*

The seventh of our breath prayers we have been praying now.

Remember, we are using our breath as we inhale saying a Word of God silently to ourselves and as we exhale and say the corresponding Word.

This seventh prayer is from the Lord's Prayer. A prayer that we have prayed many times before but today we focus on one little part of it. The part where we ask God for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. As God's kingdom comes to us, we pray that he strengthens us in his word and in faith until the end of our lives.

*(Slide 22)*

Let's be still, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs fill with air and then let that air out again....

Turn your eyes now to this verse on the screen from Matthew Chapter 6, verse 10. Let's read the text in bold out aloud;

**Inhale: On earth**

**Exhale: as it is in heaven.**

As we pray now, repeat silently to yourself the first line as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale...

Let's do that again a second time, inhale with the is word from God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 23)*

May you live out God's will in the world today as it is in heaven. Amen.

## **Week 8 - Psalm 46:1**

*(Slide 24)*

We pray another breath prayer now.

Remember, we are using our breathe as we inhale saying a Word of God silently to ourselves and as we exhale and say the corresponding Word of God.

Psalm 46 again, this time it is the first verse of the psalm which is a confident declaration in the God who is our refuge and strength.

*(Slide 25)*

Let's get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs inhale with air and then let that breathe out again....

As you open your eyes look at this verse from Psalm 46 and say it out loud;

Inhale: **You are our refuge**

Exhale: **and our strength.**

Let's pray and silently the first line as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale...

Let's do that a second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 26)*

Lord Jesus you are our refuge, bless us with your strength today in all we do. Amen.

## **Week 9 - Psalm 103:5**

*(Slide 27)*

We come close now to the end of our breath prayers for the term.

All along we have been using our breath as we inhale with a Word of God and then exhale with the corresponding Word.

A number of these prayers have come from the prayerbook of the Bible, the Psalms. This one is from Psalm 103 verse 5, a psalm of David in which he blesses God for all God's blessings to him; his forgiveness, healing, love and mercy.

*(Slide 28)*

Let's be still, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....Feel your lungs fill with air and then empty as you breathe out again....

Look at these words from Psalm 103. Read them out aloud;

Inhale: **You fill my life**

Exhale: **with good things.**

We pray this breath prayer now, as you say the first line as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale...

A second time, inhale with this Word of God....and exhale...

A third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 29)*

Bless the Lord on my soul and forget not all good things in my life. Amen.

## **Week 10 - Philippians 4:7**

*(Slide 30)*

Here we are in week ten, with the last of our breath prayers.

This last prayer is from the New Testament letter of Philippians. A section of the Bible that encourages us to rejoice in the Lord always, to bring all our concerns worries and concerns to God in prayer and he will give us peace in our bodies.

*(Slide 31)*

Let's be still, get our bodies in a comfortable position, as we become quiet and focus on our breathing.

Take a deep breath now and inhale....exhale....

Turn your eyes to look at this verse from Philippians Chapter 4 verse 7. Read out aloud with me;

Inhale: **Peace of Christ,**

Exhale: **guard my heart and mind.**

I invite you to pray the first line as you inhale....then the second line as you exhale.

A second time, inhale this Word of God....and exhale...

Finally a third time, inhale...exhale...

*(Slide 32)*

May the peace of Christ guard your hearts and mind this day and always. Amen.