

SACRED RHYTHMS | breath prayer

Materials: Journal & Pen

Brief Description:

A breath prayer is a prayer you can pray along with the rhythm of your breath. It is a thought prayer with the rhythm of your breath- it is not said out loud. Usually, two short phrases or one longer phrase, it is a short prayer that you can repeat with your breath to help you focus on something that you want from God, or something God is shaping you around. Some examples of breath prayers are

breathing in "The Lord is my Shepherd" / **breathing out** "I shall not want."

breathing in "You know what I need." / **breathing out** "I have enough."

breathing in "Lord Jesus Christ" / **breathing out** "Have mercy on me, a sinner."

This guided practice of developing a breath prayer is from Ruth Haley Barton's book *Sacred Rhythms*.

Doing the Practice:

- Begin by spending time in God's presence, allowing yourself to settle into a place of quiet communion with Him. It might help to take some deep breaths and ask God to help you be attentive to His presence and His guidance.
- Imagine Jesus calling your name and asking, "_____ what do you want?" Allow your truest, most honest answer to bubble up from your heart, and share this with Him. It might be helpful to write the phrase, "God, what I want most from you right now is..." in your journal, and just let your response flow. Sometimes its helpful to just write a while until your thoughts begin to gather around the one thing that you realize is your deepest desire. Write until you have a phrase that captures your deep desire succinctly.
- Choose your favorite name or image of God as you relate to Him right now, such as Father, Comforter, Shepherd, God, Jesus, Spirit, Creator, Breath of Life, Lord- whatever name is how God is relating to you right now. Write, "My most meaningful name for God is..."
- Now combine your name for God with the expression of your heart's desire. Place it where it is easiest to say in the rhythm of your breathing. Try out a few ways or options until you find the phrase that fits with the rhythm of your breath and expresses your heart's desire well. It can be a phrase from a Bible verse or words of your own.
- Once you've chosen your breath prayer, pray it into the spaces of your day. When you're waiting, when you're worried or anxious, when you need a sense of God's presence. Over time, learn to pray it underneath all the other thoughts and words that swirl around you throughout your daily interactions. In times of solitude, pray this prayer as a way of entering into silence and of bringing your mind back to your desire when it begins to wander. Use the breath prayer God

has given you consistently until you feel this prayer no longer captures your deepest need or desire or until God gives you another one.