



## Breath Awareness

This meditation focuses on using your breath and breath awareness as a component of prayer.

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## OVERVIEW

Breath meditation focused on the intimate relation between breath, spirit, and life.

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## Scripture

### GENESIS 2:4B-7

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

### JOHN 20:19-22

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

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## Introducing the Practice

Breathing is often an unconscious process that we fail to notice or properly value. We know that breathing is necessary for our survival, but we rarely make an intentional effort to appreciate the life-giving nature of breath. In the Biblical languages, we see an intimate associate between breath, spirit, and life that existed in the very foundations of our tradition. The Hebrew word “rûach” and the Greek word “pneúma” can both be translated as spirit, wind, breath, or life-force depending on the context in which the word is used. While the

founders of our tradition had this association between breath, spirit, and life built into their language, we often overlook this association in our modern context and busy lives. It is important that we make time to intentionally be aware of our breath and reflect on its relation to spirit and life.

While there are some traditional Christian prayer practices that discuss breathing as a component of prayer, we can additionally benefit from the shared insights of our Buddhist and Hindu brothers and sisters. In the 20th century, increased dialogue between Christianity and Asian religious traditions brought new spiritual practices to Western Christian spirituality that were specifically focused on breath awareness. Our breath meditation today is inspired by breath meditations from these Asian traditions.

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## Preparing for the Practice

Have everyone spread out to find a comfortable place to sit where they can still hear the voice of the person guiding the practice.

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## The Spiritual Practice

Find a comfortable place to sit as you prepare your heart and mind for a time of prayer. Close your eyes and slow the thoughts of your mind.

Bring your attention to your breathing. Take a deep breath in ... and slowly exhale out.

Though we know that God is totally transcendent beyond all creation, we also know that God is immanently present throughout all creation. Become aware of the divine presence that is in the air that you breathe and all the air that surrounds you.

As you inhale, feel the divine life that fills your lungs. As you exhale, sink deeper into the silent presence of God.

Continue to breathe slowly and attentively in this way, conscious of the Spirit of God that gives life along with each breath.

(long silent pause)

If you feel your mind start to wander at all, simply bring your attention back to your breathing, aware of the life-giving presence of God through each breath.

*Duration: 15-20 minutes*

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## Discussion Questions

1. What was this practice like for you? What did you experience when you focused your awareness on your breath?
2. How do you think this practice can enhance the rest of our Christian practices and our faith lives?