

## The Breath Prayer

The practice of “breath prayers” or “prayers of the heart” are from an early Christian tradition started in the Eastern churches in an attempt to follow the command “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is a short petition to God from the depths of one’s soul, expressed over and over rhythmically, like breathing. In breath prayer, it’s as though we’re exhaling stress or fear or unbelief and inhaling the reality that God is near and good.

The most famous breath prayer is the “Jesus Prayer”:

*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”*<sup>1</sup>

While breathing in, a practitioner prays the first half of that sentence

*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God...”*

Then, while exhaling, the remainder of the short petition

*“have mercy on me, a sinner.”*

The goal to remember that God is with us and orient our hearts towards God in a mindful and purposeful way.

Other “breath prayers”

Times of lagging faith (Mark 9:24)

*“Lord, I do believe...help my unbelief.”*

Reminders of God’s faithful love (from Psalm 136)

*“Your love, O Lord...endures forever”*

When you feel weary (Psalm 62:1)

*“My soul finds rest...in God alone.”*

When you feel fearful (Psalm 56:3)

*“When I am afraid...I put my trust in you.”*

Need renewal (Ephesians 3:17)

*“Christ dwell in my heart... ground me in your love.”*

<sup>1</sup>The “Jesus Prayer” is adapted from Luke 18:13 and 39.