

prayer

a six-week invitation

Rev. Shannon LeMaster-Smith

Prayer is how we connect with God. Sometimes there are words; other times it means simply being still and knowing that God is present. Prayer can look like meditation or intentional breathing or walking; coloring or singing. In a sense, prayer is an attitude – a sense of reverence that God's presence is real, right here and now.

Prayer is experiencing and interacting with God.

In this six week booklet, you will find six different types of prayer. The invitation is to practice each type for one week at a time.

For each type of prayer there is a Breath Prayer. A Breath Prayer is a simple set of words that you can say in one breath. As you inhale, center your mind and heart on the words and say the words aloud as you slowly exhale. You may repeat the Breath Prayer three times or as many times as you need to feel connected with God.

Use this book by yourself or with a small group. On the first day of the week, read over the description and the scripture. Throughout the week, reflect on the questions and practice the breath prayer. You may even come up with your own breath prayer to practice.

Ask God to reveal to you how this type of prayer is helpful for connecting you with God and with others. You may choose to color the introduction word while you pray and/or reflect.

There is a Spotify Playlist
with the songs listed for each week, in order.



A Breath Prayer for all who use this book:
May these prayers strengthen our connection with God and with one another.

confession

Sin is what disconnects us from God and one another. When we put our own needs above others and reject God's Way of Love that Jesus showed us, we distance ourselves from God.

The good news is that God is always with us, no matter how distant we feel.

God's mercy and grace are overflowing and never-ending.

A simple prayer of forgiveness heals the divide and brings us near to God.

READ Luke 18: 9-14

Jesus told this parable to certain people who had convinced themselves that they were righteous and who looked on everyone else with disgust: "Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, 'God, I thank you that I'm not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn't even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, 'God, show mercy to me, a sinner.' I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."

REFLECT

- What do you need to confess today?
- What sins have made you feel disconnected from God or others?

BREATH PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.

SONGS

Into Mercy; Strong Enough; Me Without You; Forgive Us; Healing Begins

adoration

Adoration is a feeling of great love or respect for something. A prayer of adoration is to give praise to God for all of who God is and all that God has done. The Psalms are full of prayers of adoration – go take a look. Think of all the many ways God has been present in your life and all the things God has done. You might also look up the chorus lyrics in the praise song, *Prince of Peace*. The song shares many names for God and how we relate to God. Praise God for all the ways we can experience the divine presence in our lives!

READ

You, divine beings! Give to the Lord—give to the Lord glory and power!

Give to the Lord the glory due his name! Bow down to the Lord in holy splendor! (**Psalm 29:1-2**)

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise God in his fortress, the sky!

Praise God in his mighty acts! Praise God as suits his incredible greatness!

Praise God with the blast of the ram's horn! Praise God with lute and lyre!

Praise God with drum and dance! Praise God with strings and pipe!

Praise God with loud cymbals! Praise God with clashing cymbals!

Let every living thing praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (**Psalm 150**)

REFLECT

- How do you celebrate God's greatness?
- What attributes of God do you find most worthy of praise?

BREATH PRAYERS

God of all creation, I am in awe of You.

SONGS

You're Beautiful; Good Good Father; Reckless Love; Beautiful Things; Great Are You Lord

intercessory

To "intercede" is to intervene on behalf of someone else. Intercessory Prayer is praying on behalf of others. It's like a Holy Triangle of Connection, binding us to God and to the people we pray for. Prayer builds people up and gives them strength - it really does work! We may not know what people need or how to pray for others, but God knows. Sometimes intercessory prayer can simply mean saying the person's name out loud.

READ Matthew 8: 5-13

When Jesus went to Capernaum, a centurion approached, pleading with him, "Lord, my servant is flat on his back at home, paralyzed, and his suffering is awful." Jesus responded, "I'll come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. I'm a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and the servant does it." When Jesus heard this, he was impressed and said to the people following him, "I say to you with all seriousness that even in Israel I haven't found faith like this. I say to you that there are many who will come from east and west and sit down to eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth." Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it will be done for you just as you have believed." And his servant was healed that very moment.

REFLECT

- Who in your life needs healing (of body, mind, or spirit)?
- Who in your life do you wish to be more connected to through prayer?

BREATH PRAYER

- *God please be with those who need you right now.*
- *God, I lift -name- up to you. Help them feel your presence.*

SONGS

In Jesus' Name; Plowshare Prayer; Build Your Kingdom Here; My Jesus; Family

Supplication

This is probably the most common type of prayer - we love asking God for things! But think for a moment, not about what you WANT, but what you need - really.

Do you need rest? Healing? Peace about an uncomfortable situation?

Do you simply need to feel God's presence or know that you're not alone?

Ask for what you really need, and God will hear the desires of your heart.

READ Luke 11:9-13

And I tell you: Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. To everyone who knocks, the door is opened. "Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish? If a child asked for an egg, what father would give the child a scorpion? If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

REFLECT

- What is it that you (really) need right now?
- How do you tell the difference between what you want and what you need?

BREATH PRAYER

- *God, only you know what I really need. May it be so.*
- *Dear Lord, give me (choose one: peace/patience/guidance/rest/hope/grace).*

SONGS

Lord, I Need You; Graves Into Gardens; Take It to Jesus

thanksgiving

This is perhaps the most often talked about form of prayer, since we have a holiday devoted to it. However, the regular practice of gratitude can be life changing. Scripture encourages us to give thanks, even in the midst of life's struggles. There is a reason to give thanks to God all the time. Practice looking for things to be thankful for.

READ

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. **(Philippians 4:6)**

Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. **(1 Thessalonians 5:18)**

Come, let's sing out loud to the Lord! Let's raise a joyful shout to the rock of our salvation!

Let's come before him with thanks! Let's shout songs of joy to him!

The Lord is a great God, the great king over all other gods. **(Psalm 95:1-3)**

REFLECT

- What can you give thanks for right now?
- How can you remember to give thanks even in the midst of obstacles or struggles?

BREATH PRAYER

Thank you, God for everything.

SONGS

In the Lord, I'll be ever Thankful; Lord, You Are Good; Thankful;
Gratitude; Counting Every Blessing

guidance

The older you get, the more decisions there are to make. Some are big decisions, and some are small. How to spend your time and money (and energy); what to wear; who to hang out with; what to eat; what extracurricular activities to pursue; whether to go to college or work – or both, and where? DO NOT FEAR – this message is one that is repeated most in the Bible. God promises to always be with you and to guide you every step of the way as you navigate through these questions (and more).

All you have to do is ask for God's guidance (and be open to receiving it).

READ

I will instruct you and teach you about the direction you should go.

I'll advise you and keep my eye on you. (Psalm 32:8)

Lead me in your truth—teach it to me— because you are the God who saves me.

I put my hope in you all day long. (Psalm 25:5)

A third time the Lord called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

Then Eli realized that it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down where he'd been.

Then the Lord came and stood there, calling just as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel said, "Speak. Your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:1-11)

REFLECT

- Where do you need God's guidance in your life right now?
- How can you be open to receiving God's guidance?

BREATH PRAYER

- *Show me your ways, oh God*
- *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*

SONGS

My Hope Is You; I Will Follow; Oceans; Help Me Find It; Isaiah 43

Rev. Shannon LeMaster-Smith is an ordained United Methodist Deacon, serving in the Western North Carolina Conference. She has been in youth ministry for over sixteen years and has written various curriculum and faith formation resources. She is married to her best friend Jonathan. See more of Deacon Shannon's writings at deacons Shannon.org.

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