

Prayer Guide

February 27, 2024

Today, as the Underground, we come together in prayer and fasting, collectively joining our hearts in a “laser-focused” way.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: LAMENT

Read Lamentations 2:18

The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. You walls of Daughter Zion, let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest.

Lament carves out a sacred space where we confront the shattered fragments of our world and the fractures within ourselves, acknowledging the arduous path toward healing and redemption. It is an act of refusal to look the other way, rationalize, or dismiss the harsh realities of suffering. Through lamentation, we unleash the raw intensity of grief and sorrow, giving voice to the anguish dwelling within us and the woundedness pervasive in our surroundings.

WRITING A PRAYER OF LAMENT

1. **Direct CALL to God:**
Emphasize a specific aspect of God’s character that you want to highlight and fall into.
2. **Candid Expression of Your COMPLAINT:**
Identify the root of your grief, sorrow, or anger. Articulate the challenging situation that confronts you in an unedited and whole-hearted way.
3. **CRY OUT for God’s Help:**
Clearly state the specific action or intervention you seek from God. What do you need? What are you longing for? How do you long for God to move?

4. **CONTEMPLATE God’s Faithfulness:**
Take a moment to review instances where God has been present in past hardships. Provide evidence of God’s faithfulness and consider how it might apply to your current suffering.¹

Take a minute to reflect on each of these four steps silently.

Now, write out your lament or pray through these steps out loud. When you finish, wait in the silence.

Before we move on, remember that hundreds of people who are either in the KCU family or closely connected will open this prayer guide today and offer their prayer of lament. If you are able, pray for God’s healing grace to be poured out on them in their lament.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: BREATH PRAYER

Within the KC Underground, we often remind each other of the importance of Breathing In and Breathing Out within the BLESS practices. We breathe in and breathe out prayer, stories, meals, service, and the Gospel. In that spirit today, we invite you to carry on this prayer of lament with an ancient practice in the church called Breath Prayer.

In the beginning, God breathed into humanity’s dust-formed body, giving us life.

“God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!”

Genesis 2:7 (MSG)



Then, after His Resurrection, recalling the creation, Jesus breathes New Life into His followers, creating a new humanity designed for a mission.

Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22 (NIV)

"In his hands is the life of every living thing, and the breath of every human being."

Job 12:10

The Biblical languages link Spirit and breath. Both the Hebrew word "ruah" and the Greek word "pneuma" are translated as either "breath" or "spirit" (God's Spirit or our spirit). To breathe is to be alive! And the spirit is the will, the essence of life.

The book of Psalms closes with these purpose-filled words "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

You were made to breathe in and breathe out.

Just as our physical body needs oxygen continuously, so too our spiritual being is dependent upon God. Air and spirit must move two ways—in and out—for us to live. God's Spirit breathes into our spirit and makes us alive.

Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer that dates back to the third century. Breath prayers are short prayers that coincide with inhaling and exhaling. These prayers trace their roots back to the "Jesus Prayer," which found its practice within the Eastern Orthodox Church as early as the third and fourth centuries, particularly among Egyptian desert monks. Early practitioners would rhythmically repeat the phrase, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," aligning it with their breath. Over time, the prayer evolved to the concise

forms of "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy" or simply, "Jesus, mercy."

Breath prayer serves as a tangible embodiment of "praying without ceasing," and has the potential to become as instinctive as breathing. This form of prayer is intended to be brief, comprising just six to eight syllables, allowing for easy customization to resonate with the desires of one's heart in sync with one's very breath.

1. Choose a Phrase. It can be a verse from the Bible or a line of praise and petition. It can be as simple as a word representing what you long to pick up and release. Consider making your lament into a breath prayer today.
2. Breathe In and Breathe Out: As you inhale, speak the first part of your prayer. As you exhale, speak the latter half of the prayer.
3. Continue Your Prayer: Repeat at least five times, noticing God's presence with you as you breathe in and out. ²

Examples:

Inhale: Lord, I am weary.

Exhale: Provide me with soul-filling rest.

Inhale: Your yoke is easy.

Exhale: Your burden is light.

Continue through the rest of this day with your Breath Prayer. Don't beat yourself up if you forget—you likely will. Just gently return to your Breath Prayer, knowing your Father is proud of you.

¹*Adapted from W. David O. Taylor; Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life

² Steps of Breath Prayer adapted from Session 1, Foundation of a Reconciling Community, by Arrabon (www.arrabon.com)

