

THE JESUS PRAYER

DISCIPLINES
& PRACTICES

What would it look like for you to worship God with literally every breath? I used to think that this was impossible...impractical...unrealistic...just an over spiritualized saying...That is, until I found the Jesus Prayer.

This prayer was created out of someone's ambition to rise to Paul's challenge in Ephesians: "pray without ceasing." To do so, this person had the brilliant idea of combining prayer with one of the only things we already do "without ceasing:" breathing.

The prayer goes like this: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God [breathe in], have mercy on me, a sinner [breathe out]." Of course, this isn't something you usually pray out loud, so it actually looks more like this: [slowly breathe in and out once or twice]

This has become one of my favorite ways to pray in the last few years. When it was first taught to me in a class about spiritual formation, we were released from class and given an hour to walk around campus praying this prayer. The repeating, repeating, and repeating of this prayer alongside your breath will begin to train your mind to relate the two. After doing this a few times, I began to become more and more aware of my breathing over the next few weeks. And the more I was aware of my breathing, the more I would start praying this prayer. I was well on my way to making my very breath praise the Lord.

The words themselves aren't special. In fact, they have changed over the years. Some versions are longer, some short, but I have given you its most basic version. You could even make your own prayer to go along with it. The real power is in the

pairing of praise and bodily function. It reminds us that every part of us, our very life and breath, is God's. He is deserving of praise.

I am going to leave you to practice this on your own. Maybe you'll like it, maybe you won't. Some of you may make this a daily practice, others will find it not very useful. My challenge is that you would at least give it a try. Reference the prayer in the attached document, and then look ahead for more instructions on how to progress with this spiritual practice. I hope you find it as helpful as I have in reminding not only your mind but your body to praise the Lord.

Instructions

As you breathe in, pray these words: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God...” As you breathe out, pray these words: “ ...have mercy on me, a sinner.”

reminder: you can change this prayer and make it your own, the main thing is the breathing

First Time: Spend as much time as you’ve got left practicing this a few times. Get used to praying with your breaths. Allow yourself to relax and focus on who God is and be thankful for what he has given you. The prayer will guide you. [Even if you don’t have any time left, I am certain you have at least 5 more seconds to practice this just once.]

Another Step: Try setting aside a full hour to walk around, or find a quiet place and pray this prayer the whole time. I understand, this is incredibly repetitive! It is supposed to be. You are training your body to associate breathing with prayer, and this will take time. Doing this for long periods of time is what will cause you to start noticing your breaths even when you are done with your allotted time.

Final Step: Pray each morning that you would notice your breaths during the day. When you do find yourself aware of your breathing, take a minute to slow down, pray the prayer, and give thanks to God.

Bonus: If you have enjoyed this practice, share it with someone else who you think might benefit from it too!