

Breathe

... **BECAUSE I AM**

In this season of uncertainty, one thing is certain. Jesus is alive and the only answer for our time. His death and resurrection prove he was who he said he was and that everything he said was true. Through the power of his Spirit, Jesus is with us. He is our help and our hope. Whatever concerns we may have or circumstances we may find ourselves in, Jesus invites us to come to him, breathe, and embrace his words: I AM.

As we enter into this week of prayer, each day focuses on one of Jesus's I AM statements with reflection questions to draw us closer to Jesus and listen to what he may be saying to us about who he is, who we are, and how he is inviting us to respond to his nudging.

A guided breath prayer and an image for visio divina are included to provide sacred space for us to be still with Jesus around each day's I AM prayer.

May you meet Jesus in a special way this week.

ABOUT BREATH PRAYERS

Nothing is more refreshing than a deep breath to refresh and calm the body, mind, and spirit. When prayer is added to this practice, we create a holy moment where we can become aware of how close God is to us.

Followers of Christ have been saying breath prayers for centuries. These prayers turn our hearts and minds toward God, allowing him to restore our souls in a moment of meditation or petition.

To practice breath prayer, breathe in as you whisper the first part of a phrase or verse (or silently say it in your head), then breathe out as you whisper the rest of the phrase or verse.

For Example:

SPEAK, LORD (*inhale*) ... your servant is listening (*exhale*).

JESUS SON OF GOD (*inhale*) ... have mercy on me (*exhale*).

I AM ANXIOUS (*inhale*) ... but my trust is in you (*exhale*).

ABOUT VISIO DIVINA

Visio divina, or “sacred seeing,” is another prayer practice that has been around for centuries. It involves allowing our hearts, minds, and imaginations to prayerfully enter into an image to see what God may stir or wish to say to us.

The steps for this practice are simply:

- Open your heart and mind, and ask God to guide your experience.
 - Take a first look at the image.
 - Notice what you notice, what stirs within you.
 - Take a second look and look more deeply.
 - What do you notice about your reactions? What draws you? What repels you? What intrigues you? What emotions are stirred?
 - Reflect on or journal what has surfaced for you before God.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you consider what God may be saying to you.
 - Is there an invitation or something you wish to say to God?
 - Thank God for your time together.
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Bio | **Tammy Long is co-lead pastor of South Bay Community Church in Fremont, California.**

She is an ordained minister with the Evangelical Covenant Church, a trained spiritual director, and a writer. She has a master’s degree in education from Cal State East Bay and a master’s degree in Christian formation from North Park Theological Seminary.



Tammy is passionate about seeing people connect with God and grow deeper in love with the Trinity, both individually and in community. Whether through preaching, teaching, spiritual direction, facilitating a small group, or leading a retreat, Tammy finds her deepest joy in walking alongside others as they draw closer to the heart of God to experience spiritual transformation.

She enjoys reading, movies, traveling, yoga, being in nature, and spending time with her husband, adult children, and grandchildren.



BREATH PRAYER

Jesus, bread
of my life

You alone
nourish and
fulfill me.

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE PRAYER

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." JOHN 6:35, NRSV

Who doesn't like the smell, taste, and texture of warm fresh bread from the oven? Bread is the embodiment of nourishment. In all its forms, bread is the most widely consumed food in the world. Historical research suggests bread has been part of the human diet for at least 30,000 years! In the Bible, bread is mentioned more than 400 times. So when Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life," his listeners took notice.

Not long after Jesus fed 5,000 people (John 6:1-14), the crowd was hungry for more. Yet they weren't hungry for what Jesus was really offering, they just wanted more bread. Jesus came to feed our deepest hunger—our soul's hunger for eternal connection with God.

But there's more. We also hunger for love, purpose, safety, protection. We hunger to be known, for joy and peace—the list goes on. We often experience deeper longings and hunger that we may not even be aware of. **While we naturally seek to satisfy our hunger, we may discover that a deeper hunger, a wanting something more, persists.**

Just as physical bread satisfies our physical hunger, Jesus longs to satisfy the deepest hungers of our hearts. Jesus's gift of eternal life through faith is vast and deep and about more than going to heaven. He longs to satisfy and nourish every dimension of our lives.

He said he came that we might have abundant life, which touches every aspect of life in soul-satisfying fulfillment. When we are hungry for more, we sometimes look everywhere but to our true Source for nourishment and fulfillment. But Jesus reminds us, "I am the bread of life."

For Reflection

- Do you have areas in your life where you feel unsatisfied?
- How might drawing closer to Jesus satisfy your hunger?

Contemplate the image and reflect.

- _____ **CENTER** your body and mind to be with Jesus.
- _____ **NAME** in one word something you hunger for.
- _____ **SLOWLY INHALE**, "Jesus, Bread of my life."
- _____ **SLOWLY EXHALE**, "You alone nourish and fulfill me."
- _____ **REPEAT** the breath prayer until you feel Jesus's peace.
- _____ **LOOK AND LISTEN** for Jesus to share ways he satisfies your hunger today.