

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.

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, light
of the world**

**May I see and
reflect your life.**

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD PRAYER

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” JOHN 8:12, NRSV

Have you ever been to a place where there are no windows, no lights, or no stars? A place so dark you can’t even see your hand in front of your face? Such darkness can be palpable, oppressive, even suffocating. We can’t see. We bump into things. We lose our way.

We were not meant to live in darkness.

Our world under the weight of sin is like that—dark, oppressive, heavy, and evil. We have lost our way. We are bumping into each other and evil lurks. One has only to look at systemic racial injustice, poverty and economic disparity, health and education inequities, misogyny and bigotry, oppression, and greed to recognize our world is very much in darkness.

When Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” the timing coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles. At dusk during the celebration, four giant candelabras would be lit, signifying the pillar of fire by which God guided the children of Israel through the wilderness at night (Exodus 13:21). The original hearers would have recalled the story—but Jesus’s invitation was about a different type of darkness. Jesus was referring to spiritual darkness and our separation from God due to sin. Jesus is the light who dispels darkness and reunites all who believe in God—from darkness to light, from spiritual death to eternal life.

And Jesus is our light today. Through his Spirit, he guides us in our confusion and dark seasons. He points the way, so we don’t get lost. Anyone who follows Jesus not only walks in his light but also has the light of life as children of light. Just as the moon reflects the sun, we reflect the Son in our dark world. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”

For Reflection

- Is there an area in your life where you feel you are walking in darkness and need the light of Christ to guide you?
- Where might Jesus be inviting you to reflect his light in this dark world?

Contemplate the image and reflect.

_____ **CENTER** your body and mind to be with Jesus.

_____ **THINK** where light is needed today (for you personally or in the world).

_____ **SLOWLY INHALE**, “Jesus, Light of the world.”

_____ **SLOWLY EXHALE**, “May I see and reflect your light.”

_____ **REPEAT** the breath prayer until you feel Jesus’s peace.

_____ **LOOK AND LISTEN** for God’s light for you and through you today