

# Breathe

## ... **BECAUSE I AM**

**I**n 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.**

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## 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:

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

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

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

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## 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, you  
are my gate  
In your fold  
I'm safe  
and secure.



## I AM THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP PRAYER

**“Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.”** JOHN 10:7, NRSV

**S**cottish theologian George Adam Smith (1856–1942) was traveling through the Holy Land when he encountered a shepherd with his flock. The shepherd showed him where he kept the sheep at night. It was an enclosure of four walls, open to the sky with only one way in. “When the sheep are in here,” the shepherd explained, “they are perfectly safe.”

“But there is no door,” Smith replied.

“I am the door,” the shepherd responded. “When the light is gone and the sheep are inside, I lie in that open space. No sheep can ever go out without crossing my body, and if a wolf tries to come in, my body blocks his path; I am the door.”

This I am statement is translated as both “door” and “gate,” but the meaning is the same. Jesus alone is the opening by which his sheep can come into the fold, the kingdom of God. Once through the gate, they are safe from thieves and robbers who intend to hurt, kill, and destroy.

Thieves and robbers come in many forms. In this passage Jesus is referring to false prophets and hypocritical religious leaders. But thieves and robbers include anything that draws us away from Jesus and the abundant life he offers (John 10:10). Fear, anxiety, stress, storms of life, unbiblical teachings, even our fleshly nature can hurt us and rob us of the peace and protection Jesus offers. First Peter 5:8 says, “Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.”

We discipline ourselves by staying close to the Shepherd. In the sheep pen, we are safe from predators, thieves, and robbers. **We are safe under Jesus’s watchful eye.** Jesus said, “I am the gate.”

### For Reflection

- Do spiritual robbers and thieves in your life threaten to disrupt or harm your relationship with Jesus?
- In what ways does Jesus remind you that you are safe with him?

### Contemplate the image and reflect.

- \_\_\_\_\_ **CENTER** your body and mind to be with Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **THINK** about a place that’s welcoming and safe for you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **SLOWLY INHALE**, “Jesus, you are my Gate.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ **SLOWLY EXHALE**, “In your fold I’m safe and secure.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ **REPEAT** the breath prayer until you feel Jesus’s peace.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **LOOK AND LISTEN** for ways Jesus protects and keeps you today.