

# 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.

A shepherd wearing a hat and a vest stands in a grassy field, looking over a large flock of sheep. The background features rolling green hills and dense forests under a soft, golden light.

BREATH PRAYER

Jesus, my good  
shepherd

I belong to you.

## I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD PRAYER

**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”** JOHN 10:11, NRSV

**S**heep are mentioned in the Bible more than 500 times, more than any other animal. The obvious reason is the pastoral culture of the times, but sheep can also be a metaphor for our current reality.

First, sheep are biologically and anatomically defenseless. They do not have natural ways to protect themselves, so they need a shepherd. Second, sheep often get themselves into trouble. Although sometimes sheep are stereotyped as dumb, they can actually be as intelligent as rodents and monkeys. One reason sheep get into trouble is because they are followers. It's part of their herd instinct. A story out of Eastern Turkey reported 400 sheep falling 15 meters to their death because they followed one sheep off a cliff.

Sheep also get in trouble because of their sight. Sheep have excellent peripheral vision. They can see far on either side without turning their heads, but it is difficult for them to see what is directly in front of them.

**So sheep often stray from the path to get a better look or because they are curious. They are easily sidetracked or lose their way.**

Sound familiar?

Good shepherds in Jesus's day were devoted to their sheep. They would talk and sing to them, and anoint them with oil as a pest repellent. A good shepherd provided nourishment, refreshment, and protection. Good shepherds were so involved with their sheep that they knew and called each one by name. They were willing to risk their own comfort and even their lives for the sake of their sheep.

This is the caring and sacrificial relationship Jesus has in mind when he says, “I am the good shepherd.” The word translated “good” is associated with beautiful, honorable, and intrinsically good. Our good Shepherd is a guide who can be completely trusted as we follow him.

### For Reflection

- Consider the most loving, caring, nurturing person in your life. What does it mean to know that their love is only a fraction of God's love and care for you?
  - When do you feel most connected and closest to God?

### Contemplate the image and reflect.

\_\_\_\_\_ CENTER your body and mind to be with Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_ WRAP YOUR ARMS AROUND YOURSELF and feel Jesus's love.

\_\_\_\_\_ SLOWLY INHALE, “Jesus, my good Shepherd.”

\_\_\_\_\_ SLOWLY EXHALE, “I belong to you.”

\_\_\_\_\_ REPEAT THE BREATH PRAYER until you feel Jesus's peace.

\_\_\_\_\_ LOOK AND LISTEN for ways Jesus expresses his love and care for you today.