



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

BREATH PRAYERS: BREATHE IN. BREATHE OUT. REPEAT.

By Lee Ann Zanon

Breathe in. Breathe out. Repeat. According to medical experts, this miraculous rhythm takes place an average of 20,000 times daily. It comprises one of our most essential functions, marking birth as well as death. I don't usually give it much attention, but I have recently been discovering more of its wonder and power.

In the current chapter of my chronic pain story, I am re-learning how to breathe. Training my mind and lungs to a slow, measured pace (rather than rapid and shallow) has spanned six months. The work has been profound. As I've spent countless hours in solitude doing breathing exercises, the Lord has led me to new realms of His compassion. He has revealed places of brokenness I had long ignored. He has reminded me that my value is not based on external qualities or accomplishments but on the simple truth that I am His.

God has also introduced me to the practice of connecting breath and prayer. Chronic Joy's Breath Prayers printable resource has been a meaningful source of encouragement.

"Chronic illness, mental illness, and chronic pain can become fertile ground for breath prayer. When it's difficult to think or process language, when it's hard to move beyond the suffering, when it seems impossible to go on, breath prayers can become a flicker of light for our next breath."

The printable offers helpful, step-by-step guidance, providing practical details (such as closing our eyes and quieting our thoughts) as well as Scripture prayers.

For example, paraphrased from Psalm 62:1, inhale: *"My soul finds rest;"* exhale: *"In God alone."* From Colossians 3:16, inhale: *"Let the word of Christ;"* exhale: *"Dwell in you richly."*

BREATH AS PRAYER

Another tool I've been using is Jennifer Tucker's book "Breath as Prayer" (Thomas Nelson, 2022). It features 84 Scripture-based breath prayers, each with an accompanying devotional. It also presents a concise medical overview of how deep breathing impacts our nervous system.

Tucker's introductory words offer hope: "Anxiety doesn't have to trigger you to spiral into panic, but can instead trigger you to turn to Christ in prayer." She describes the practice as "... inhaling God's grace and exhaling our fears."

For me, breath prayer is becoming an effective way to counteract pain-related anxiety. I practice it for at least five minutes daily – and during other brief moments when waiting at a traffic light or standing in the grocery store line. I can't predict where breath prayer will take me related to long-term relief, but I know that focusing on God's Word is always a life-giving choice.

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank You for the gift of our breath. Thank You for the treasure of Your Word. Please teach us to inhale and exhale Your truth, that we may receive Your peace. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How often do you think about breathing?
2. What aspects of chronic pain or illness cause you to feel anxious?
3. On a typical day, when could you pause for breath prayer?

AN INVITATION

I invite you to read the Breath Prayers printable and consider its insights. I am profoundly thankful for how it has helped me. I trust it will do the same for you.