



The Yahweh Prayer

This description of the Yahweh or YHWH Prayer comes from Ryan Cagle, Epiphany's Director of Youth and Young Adults ministries, and from the April 9, 2016 daily meditation of Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM.

Breathing is not only vital to our biological life but has also been seen as spiritually important in most religious traditions. In the creation narrative, God breathes life into the nostrils of humankind. The Spirit is the “breath of God” the animating force that fills our lungs. Jesus, in sending out the twelve, breathes on them as a ritual to symbolize the presence of the Spirit with and in them.

Breathing prayer takes many forms. One of the most well known in the Christian tradition would be the “Jesus Prayer” that comes to us from our Eastern Orthodox kin. Another, perhaps somewhat less familiar, is tied to the Jewish tradition.

In his April 9, 2016, daily meditation, Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM writes this about the practice:

A rabbi taught this prayer to me many years ago. I write about it in the second chapter of my book *The Naked Now*. The Jews did not speak God's name, but breathed it with an open mouth and throat: inhale—*Yah*; exhale—*weh*. By our very breathing we are speaking the name of God and participating in God's breath. This is our first and our last word as we enter and leave the world.

Breathe the syllables with open mouth and lips, relaxed tongue:

Inhale—*Yah*
Exhale—*weh*

During a period of meditation, perhaps twenty minutes, use this breath as a touchstone. Begin by connecting with your intention, your desire to be present to God. Breathe naturally, slowly, and deeply, inhaling and exhaling *Yah-weh*. Let your focus on the syllables soften and fall away into silence. If a thought, emotion, or sensation arises, observe but don't latch on to it. Simply return to breathing.

You may be distracted numerous times. And perhaps your entire practice will be full of sensations clamoring for attention. Contemplation is truly an exercise in humility! But each interruption is yet another opportunity to return to Presence, to conscious participation in God's life.