

Let Everything That Has Breath

Psalm 150 concludes with the following command: Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Each breath we take is a gift from God and can be turned into an expression of praise to God. Here are some breathing exercises that can help us slow down, focus, and praise God with the breath He first breathed into us.



Deep Breathing

Most people take short, shallow breaths into their chest. It can make you feel anxious and zap your energy. With this technique, you'll learn how to take bigger breaths, all the way into your stomach.

- Get comfortable. You can lie on your back in bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head and knees. Or you can sit in a chair with your shoulders, head, and neck supported against the back of the chair.

- Breathe in through your nose. Let your stomach fill with air.
- Breathe out through your nose.
- Place one hand on your stomach. Place the other hand on your chest.
- As you breathe in, feel your stomach rise. As you breathe out, feel your stomach lower. The hand on your stomach should move more than the one that's on your chest.
- Take three more full, deep breaths. Breathe fully into your stomach and notice how it rises and falls with your breath.

Breath Focus

While you do deep breathing, use a picture in your mind and a word or phrase to help you feel more relaxed.

- Close your eyes.
- Take a few big, deep breaths.
- Breathe in. As you do that, imagine that the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm. Try to feel it throughout your body.
- Breathe out. While you're doing it, imagine that the air leaves with your stress and tension.
- Now use a word or phrase with your breath. As you breathe in, say in your mind, "I breathe in peace and calm."
- As you breathe out, say in your mind, "I breathe out stress and tension."
- Continue for 10 to 20 breaths.

PRAISE THE LORD



Equal Time for Breathing in and Breathing Out

In this exercise, you'll match how long you breathe in with how long you breathe out. Over time, you'll increase the amount of time you are able to breathe in and out.

- Sit comfortably on the floor or in a chair.
- Breathe in through your nose. As you do it, count to five.
- Breathe out through your nose to the count of five.
- Repeat several times.
- Once you feel comfortable with breaths that last five counts, increase how long you breathe in and breathe out. You can work up to breaths that last up to 10 counts.

Modified Lion's Breath

As you do this exercise, imagine that you're a lion.

- Sit comfortably on the floor or in a chair.
- Breathe in through your nose. Fill your stomach all the way up with air.
- When you can't breathe in any more, open your mouth as wide as you can. Breathe out with an "R-Ahh- r" sound.
- Repeat several times.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

In this technique, you breathe in as you tense a muscle group and breathe out as you release it. Progressive muscle relaxation helps you relax physically and mentally.

- Lie comfortably on the floor, or sit in a chair using a strong posture.
- Take a few deep breaths to relax.
- Breathe in. Tense the muscles of your feet.
- Breathe out. Release the tension in your feet.
- Breathe in. Tense your calf muscles.
- Breathe out. Release the tension in your calves.
- Work your way up your body. Tense and release each muscle group while breathing deeply. Include your legs, stomach, chest, fingers, arms, shoulders, neck, and face.



Using Your Breath for a Purpose

Now that you have mastered the art of deep breathing, here is a group game to practice using your breath for a purpose.

- Give everyone in your group a tissue.
- Compete with one another to see who can keep their tissue in the air the longest using only their breath to keep it afloat.
- Next, partner up. See if you can pass a tissue back and forth using only your breath to keep it afloat. Practice makes perfect!

Discussion Questions:

Psalm 150 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” What are some ways you can use your breath to praise the Lord? What are some ways your small group can praise the Lord together this year?

Praise Machine

This fast and physical group activity gets participants moving and working together in a way that generates energy and promotes collaboration. One at a time, members of the group become parts of the “praise machine”, each one making a distinct physical motion and a sound, until the whole group is working together in motion, as one human machine.

- Stand in a large circle. Explain to the group that their task is to build a human praise machine. Each individual will become one moving part of the machine.
- One person enters the circle and begins making a repeating sound and a physical movement (for example: a “whoop whoop whoop” sound while flapping one arm.) After a 5 seconds, another person enters the circle and connects to the first person, making a different sound and a different movement.
- Continue building the machine until everyone is connected, with everyone making their movements and sounds throughout the activity.
- Deconstruct the machine one person at a time.

Discussion Questions:

How did this activity expand your definition of praise?

Can the time you spend hanging out with friends doing things you enjoy be an expression of praise to God?

Think about the week ahead. What is one activity you have planned that you can choose to see as an opportunity for praising God based on what we’ve learned in StuMin tonight?