

Another Simple Way to Pray: 4-7-8 Prayer

I've previously mentioned ABC prayer and QC prayer as two simple ways to pray, whether as part of a daily practice at a set time for prayer or when you're on the go. Here is another, this time not focused on intercession or thanksgiving but on simply resting in God's presence.

It departs from a breathing technique that medical professionals recommend for fostering calm. That may not seem to have anything to do with prayer, but focusing one's attention on God requires not being distracted, at the very least, so calming down is a good first step. Remaining quietly and intentionally in the presence of God can also be a complete practice of prayer.

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This form of calming is called 4-7-8 breathing and in its medically-recommended form it goes like this: inhale deeply while counting to four. Hold your breath while counting to

seven. Then exhale slowly to a count of eight. Simple, right? Obviously you can repeat for as long as you want.

Inhale deeply while counting to four. Hold your breath while counting to seven. Then exhale slowly to a count of eight.

While calm is in itself a legitimate goal of prayer, this technique can be adapted to make it more explicitly prayerful. To do this, substitute short forms of prayer for

the counting. Here's one possibility: inhale slowly, saying 'Father, fill me'. Hold your breath, saying 'Blessed Jesus, stay with me'.

Then exhale slowly saying 'Come, Holy Spirit, walk with me'. In case you hadn't noticed, the first petition has four syllables; the second, seven and the third, eight.

Or substitute short forms of prayer for the counting.

You could use 4-7-8 prayer, repeating it over and over, as a contemplative moment at the end of a time of another form of prayer or as a prelude to Bible study. Or you could use a few rounds as a way to lift yourself up when you catch yourself yielding to anger or impatience stuck in a traffic jam or while waiting anxiously in the dentist's reception area for your root canal appointment. You could use it before church, as a way of bringing yourself into recollection that you are about to worship Almighty God.

Say as you inhale, 'Father, fill me'. Hold your breath, saying 'Blessed Jesus, stay with me'. Then exhale slowly saying 'Come, Holy Spirit, walk with me'.

If my sentences don't speak to you, compose your own set of four, seven and eight syllable petitions, a search which you could look at as in itself a form of pilgrimage, a quest with a holy purpose. However you choose to use it, 4-7-8 prayer is a simple technique for 'wasting time with God' as one writer once described prayer.

Blessings to you as you continue in your holy pilgrimage!