



SACRED PAUSE

Sacred Pause

A Moment of Presence, Awareness, and Compassion

Life moves quickly. Our bodies and hearts often carry more than we realize... responsibilities, injustices, hopes, exhaustion, beauty, and ache. The Sacred Pause offers a moment inside all of this: not to fix anything, not to force calm, but to notice what is happening within us and around us with God's nearness.

In Scripture, the invitations to pause... Selah in the Psalms or the quiet space before action in biblical narratives... often appear between movements. These pauses created room for communities to breathe, listen, and recognize the holy presence already with them. This simple rhythm of stopping, noticing, and opening ourselves to God aligns with the way Jesus moved: attuned, connected, responsive rather than reactive.

The Sacred Pause honors the space between instinct and response. It creates a compassionate opening where awareness, breath, and Spirit can meet us as we are.

A Breath Practice for Re-Centering

You may settle into this in whatever way is comfortable... standing, sitting, walking, or resting.

1. **Notice your body.**
Feel your feet on the ground or the support beneath you. No need to change anything.
2. **Take one slow breath in.**
Let the air move at its own pace.
3. **As you exhale, imagine letting a little more space open inside you.**
Not to release anything, but simply to make room.

4. Allow the next few breaths to come naturally.

Let this moment meet you rather than trying to meet the moment.

As you breathe, you may silently hold a simple phrase:

- *Here I am.*
- *You are near.*
- *Let there be space.*

Choose whatever phrase feels supportive... or none at all.

Receiving the Pause

In this moment, nothing needs to be corrected or resolved. Awareness itself becomes prayer.

You might notice:

- A sensation in your body
- A feeling surfacing
- A memory or image
- A question
- A heaviness or lightness
- A sense of longing
- Or perhaps nothing noticeable

Whatever rises (or doesn't) belongs. This is a place of compassion, not achievement.

Scripture affirms again and again that God draws near to the weary, the overlooked, the overwhelmed, the tenderhearted, and the seekers (Ps 34; Matt 11; Lk 4; Is 61). The Sacred Pause helps us participate in that nearness.

Spiritual Direction Invitations

These questions invite openness, freedom, and spaciousness. None require a specific outcome.

- What might be emerging within you as you rest in this moment of pause?
- What inner movements seem to be catching your attention right now?
- What possibilities come into view as you notice the presence of God in this space?
- What longing or resistance might be showing up as you breathe and listen?
- What layers within you seem ready for companionship, not solutions?
- What sense of God's nearness or silence might be shaping your experience?
- What inner truth might be waiting to be acknowledged with compassion?
- What direction, comfort, or courage might be quietly unfolding?

Take your time, these questions are invitations, not assignments.

Practicing Sacred Pauses in Daily Life

A Sacred Pause doesn't require long stretches of silence. It can be woven through ordinary transitions so they become places of presence:

- Arriving somewhere and letting yourself take one conscious breath
- Noticing the sky or a tree while walking
- Pausing before replying in a difficult conversation
- Allowing a moment of quiet after hearing hard news
- Letting gratitude rise when kindness surprises you
- Resting your hand on your heart during overwhelm
- Turning routine tasks... brushing teeth, washing dishes, driving... into small altars of awareness
- Sitting with Scripture long enough to notice what stirs, instead of rushing to interpretation
- Holding someone's name before God when they come to mind

These small pauses become gentle pathways of formation, opening room for the Spirit to meet us where we live, work, grieve, wonder, and grow.

A Closing Moment

To end, you might return to your breath once more.

Feel the groundedness of your body.

Notice whatever remains in your awareness.

Let a simple prayer rise from within you, even if that prayer is wordless.

You are not required to leave this pause "better."

You are simply invited to remain present to what is real, trusting that God's love is always making room for you.

Footnote: This adapted framework draws from the biblical theology of Christian formation and theological anthropology, with conceptual influence from the teachings of Tim Mackie (BibleProject), Barbara Holmes, Howard Thurman, Lisa Sharon Harper, Sheila Wise Rowe and Adele Calhoun.