

YOGA PRAYER | *Peace Of God*

I don't know about you, but Spiritual Practice in my home doesn't often look like it does in the videos we see on Sunday mornings. The invitations to be quiet, still, and reflective are interpreted as invitations to ask questions, jump on me, or play tag. If you're not able to enter into quiet contemplation before God, I want you to know that that's okay. God can meet us where we're at, whether we're quiet and still . . . or not.

If you've spent any time with children, you've probably noticed that they are full of energy. They experience the world through movement. They express themselves with not just their words - and tears - but also with their bodies. Joy, anger, sadness, worry, silliness – these are full-body experiences for them. And this can be true for adults, as well. Some of the most meaningful times that I've connected with God have happened on my yoga mat, as I've practiced linking together my breath, movement, and prayer. Anchoring ourselves through prayerful breath and movement can be a powerful way of releasing anxiety and worry, and becoming more grounded in our connection to God. It can also be a way to engage our heart, soul, mind, and strength in worship.

If you have limited mobility and aren't able to follow along with exactly what we're doing, we see you. If you're able to simply sit up straight, lengthening your spine, I invite you to do that now. Root your feet into the ground and just be aware of your body.

If you're able to stand with us, would you give this a try? Start by just standing up. How does that feel? To our kids, I would offer the invitation to shake, shake, shake your sillies out. For some of us, that might cause us to feel silly. So think of it as shaking away your tensions. Great, now slow down and come back into your body. Feel the ground beneath your feet. Turn your palms open in an expression of welcome, to receive. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable to do so. Invite God to be present with you.

Take a few breaths, noticing the air flowing in and out of your nose. As you breathe in, let your belly fill up and expand. As you breathe out, let your belly fall and deflate. Inhaling – expansion. Exhaling – letting go. “Peace of God, guard my heart and mind.” (From Philippians 4:7)

We're going to use these words to guide our movement today. So, as you inhale, and if you're able, reach your arms overhead, only as far as is comfortable – Peace of God. Now, exhale and lower your arms to your sides, guard my heart and mind. If you tend to carry your tensions in your shoulders, this might be a difficult movement for you, so just go as far as you can and notice what you're feeling. Let's do that again. Inhaling, arms up – Peace of God. Exhaling, arms down – guard my heart and mind.

Next inhale, let's take those arms up and over to the right, leaning sideways – Peace of God. Now back to centre – guard my heart and mind. Inhaling, over to the left – Peace of God – and back to centre – guard my heart and mind. Would you do that again – inhaling to one side –

Peace of God. Exhaling to centre – guard my heart and mind. Peace of God, guard my heart and mind. Peace of God.

Some of us carry stress and anxiety in our core, so if you're comfortable, we'll bring some motion into that area. Inhaling again, arms up – Peace of God. This time, let's bend forward – guard my heart and mind. If this doesn't work for your body, just drop your chin, maybe your hands rest on your thighs, maybe you bend your knees. Reaching up again – Peace of God. Forward movement – guard my heart and mind. One more time – Peace of God, guard my heart and mind.

Now pause. Palms open again. Notice how you feel. Notice your mind. Does it feel even a fraction of a bit clearer? When you feel stuck in the cycle of anxious thoughts, try spending a more extended period of time moving your body in God's presence as a way of helping move those thoughts along.

God, thank you for the gift of our bodies and breath. Thank you for meeting us where we are at, still or in motion. We know that you desire us to cast our worries and anxieties on you. Help us to practice releasing those worries to you. May we be people who welcome you into each breath, each movement, each moment. Amen.