

How to Pray When the Wind Gets Knocked From You

When I was in my junior high years, we lived in the small town of Sherrill, New York, on a street with nine guys within a year of each other in age. We had a lot of fun and got into some innocent trouble together. A great time in life!

I recall one night hanging out in the Swan boys' backyard, trying to think of something fun to do. They had a two-tiered yard with a small hedge between the two levels of ground. We got the idea of running at the hedges, jumping over them and landing on the ground beyond—a drop of about three feet.

From the point of leaping over the hedge to the bottom of the drop-off was about 5 feet. We had fun doing this a number of times. But then the inevitable happened.

One time when I ran toward the hedge (probably getting a little tired and sloppy), I did not jump quite high enough. My foot caught the hedge. Rather than falling feet first, I landed with a thud directly on my chest and stomach. The wind got knocked out of me, and I could not breathe.

I still remember that awful feeling of lying there trying to gasp for air—any air. I thought I was going to die.

Of course, I eventually caught my breath. All was well until another day of shenanigans.

Catch a Breath and Pray

I have recently found myself praying with the wind knocked out of me. You know those times. It's when things are not going well, and you're attacked on every side. Every little thing goes wrong, and you feel like you can't catch a break (or a breath).

How do you pray and walk in faith during those seasons? How can you pray in a way that allows you to catch your breath, get up and move forward?

Some people would advocate praying the Psalms during this time. Nothing wrong with that remedy. But for me, in this situation I go to a passage from one of Paul's letters:

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:4–7, NIV).

Just as I had to force myself to try to breathe when I got the wind knocked out of me, I force myself in these challenging times to rejoice. I think of the good things I have, the things that are going well—and I begin to praise Jesus for those things.

It is amazing how this simple practice can fill your spiritual lungs with air again. Try it. You'll breathe again!

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