

# Breathe

## *How to Use This Curriculum*

*Note to leaders: This material contains five lessons to be done with your group over the dnow weekend. Please refer to the person in charge over dnow for your church as to when you should do each lesson. The contents of this material in red (looks like this) will only appear in your leader material. The contents in black will appear in the student book also, and each student should have a copy of the student book as you work through the lessons.*

*There should be a dvd accompanying this material that will include several video elements to be used in the lessons. At the end of some of the lessons there is some extra material that could be incorporated into that lesson if you so desire.*

*Middle School Leaders: We know that some of the quotes found in this material might not be easily digestible for middle school students, so please help them break down any of those parts they are having trouble with.*

## Introduction

*Leader: If you do not know the students in your group it will be good to spend some time at the start of your first meeting getting to know each other. For some ideas for ice breaker games go to: <http://www.icebreakers.ws/get-to-know-you>. After you at least know the names of everyone in the group, proceed to the questions that follow.*

What does DNOW stand for? \_\_\_\_\_ (*Discipleship Now*)

What is discipleship? \_\_\_\_\_

*Read Matthew 28:19-20 This is what is known as the Great Commission which Jesus charged his followers with fulfilling until he returns. So Discipleship is the process of making disciples.*

Who is a disciple? \_\_\_\_\_

“The term translated ‘disciple’ throughout the New Testament is routinely used to describe a follower of Jesus in the Gospels and Acts. The word is a derivative of a verb meaning ‘to learn.’ At the core of discipleship is learning from a teacher. A disciple was – and is – first a student.” – Chuck Lawless<sup>1</sup>

*So our goal this weekend is to be students learning how to be a follower of Jesus.*

# Lesson 1: The First Breath

*Supplies needed: Dvd with Smarter Everyday Birthing Episode*

*Leader read: Imagine that someone asked you to prove that you were born, that you are alive. How would you do it? Would you go find your birth certificate and show them that a doctor signed off on the fact that you were born? It would be much easier to just breathe. Breath demonstrates life.*

*Almost all of the scripture in this first lesson comes from the book of John. In John 21:20,24 we see that John identifies himself as the author but instead of referring to himself by name, he would prefer to be known as the disciple who Jesus loved. In John 20:30-31 John explains his reason for writing the book. John writes so that those who read might have life. In a weekend where we are considering what it means to breathe and thus to live, there is no better place to start than learning from the disciple whom Jesus loved about what it means to be alive, what it means to breathe. So let's jump in.*

Read John 3:1-4

*How many of you remember being born of water? You remember your physical birth? Probably not many of you. But, you can know that it happened because you are alive today. You know that you are alive because you are breathing. Let's watch a video that will explain what happens with your first breath. Watch Smarter-every-day episode on a baby's first breath.*

*Nicodemus wanted to know how all of that could happen again. When we really understand what happens with our first birth. We can understand a lot more about what happens when we are born again.*

Read John 3:5-6

Jesus says that we have to be born again to be a part of the kingdom of God. We have to be born of the Spirit. The word translated as "spirit" is the Greek word: πνεύματος (pneumatosis). Pneumatosis has two ways that it can be translated: 1. Spirit 2. Breath. This word captures what these following lessons are all about. To truly breathe means to be born of the spirit.

Can you remember when you were born of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you know that you are born of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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*You can know that you have been born again in the same way that you can know that you were born the first time: Breathe. When you are born physically, you breathe physically. When you are born spiritually, you breathe spiritually.*

Have you gone from breathing spiritual amniotic fluid (poop and pee) to the point where all of that has been squeezed out and you have been able to breathe in pure clean, spiritual air? \_\_\_\_\_

When you look at your life, do you see more of what would be considered born of the flesh or more of what would be considered born of the spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Has your relationship with God actually changed the way you live? Do you see evidence of God’s kingdom in your life? Or are you choking it out slowly by spending too much time, energy, money, and thought on the things of this world?” – Francis Chan<sup>ii</sup>

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Read John 3:14-15 *Jesus is pointing to his death and the way that he will be crucified on the cross. Let’s look back at the example that he points to.* Read Numbers 21:4-9

What did the people ask for? (vs.7) \_\_\_\_\_

What did God give them? \_\_\_\_\_

*The people were still bitten by snakes, but they had a way of being saved. They had to constantly look to the serpent on the pole as a reminder where their salvation was coming from.*

So far you might be saying, yeah I have heard all of this before. I know that I have to be born again. Do you constantly look back to the cross for your salvation the way that an Israelite bitten by one of the snakes would have to look to the serpent? \_\_\_\_\_

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*So the question at this point is: What must a person do to be born again?*

Read John 6:43-48

Much like it is not totally up to a fetus as to when it will be born. There are outside forces involved in being born again. The Father has to draw a person to Christ. Now many of you might be having a hard time with this teaching. You are no different from those who first heard it.

Read John 6:60-65

*Someone else read:*

Read John 6:66-71

When you encounter this teaching, do you want to reject it or do you say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God?” \_\_\_\_\_

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*Your answer to that question will really help you know if you have been born again. Are you alive? Are you breathing?*

Read John 14:13-14

Pause now and pray and ask the Father to draw any in your group to himself to be born again who are not already born again. Ask for the Spirit to give life, to give breath.

*So what happens when a person is being drawn by the Father?*

Read John 3:16-18

What are the keys to rebirth found in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who is it that we are told that we need to believe in? \_\_\_\_\_

Read John 1:1-4, 9-14, 17

John starts off his gospel different from the other gospel writers. He does not start with the Christmas story like Matthew and Luke, nor does he just go to the start of Jesus’ ministry like Mark. Instead John starts from a metaphysical stand point. John starts from the very beginning. To tell us about Jesus, John goes all the way back to creation.

Read John 10:10

What does it mean to have an abundant life? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is your response to the fact that the creator of the universe who invented breath, came into the world and took on flesh so that you could truly breathe? \_\_\_\_\_

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“If you could see God at this moment, you would so utterly understand how worthy He is of worship that you would instinctively fall on your face and worship Him.”

– Donald Whitney<sup>iii</sup>

*The context of the next passage is when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well and she asks him about where it is appropriate to worship.*

Read John 4:23-24

Once again we see Greek constructs of the word pnuema. Jesus is teaching us that we are to worship with our very breath. To truly breathe means to worship him in spirit and in truth.

“The irony is that while God doesn’t need us but still wants us, we desperately need God but don’t really want Him most of the time.” – Francis Chan<sup>iv</sup>

Do you agree with this statement by Francis Chan? Why or Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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*So do you want the life, the spirit, the breath that we have been talking about? Is God stirring new birth inside of you?*

“The good news as Jesus preached it is not about the minimal entrance requirements for getting into heaven when you die. It is about the glorious redemption of human life – your life.” – John Ortberg<sup>v</sup>

*We can add to the end of this quote: “To teach you how to truly breathe.”*

Read John 14:15-17

*So far we have looked at rebirth resulting in believing in Jesus, but Jesus doesn't leave it there. If you want to know that you are breathing then you can examine the following questions:*

Do you love Jesus? How? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you obey Jesus? How? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received the Helper? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know the Holy Spirit living inside of you? \_\_\_\_\_

What evidence do you have of the Holy Spirit living inside of you? \_\_\_\_\_

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“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” – Jesus<sup>vi</sup>

“By surrendering yourself totally to God’s purposes, He will bring you the most pleasure in this life and the next.” – Francis Chan<sup>vii</sup>

*Close in prayer.*

## Lesson 1: Extra Material

- *John 5:24-29*
- *John 14:6*
- *1 John 5:11-12*
- *Ezekiel 37:1-14*
- *Matthew 13:44-46*
- *Revelation 4:8, 5:12, 5:13*
- *“Too often people think about their ‘spiritual lives’ as just one more aspect of their existence, alongside and largely separate from their ‘financial lives’ or their ‘vocational lives.’” – John Ortberg p. 15*
- *“Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.” – R.C. Sproul quoted by Francis Chan p. 26*
- *“Fear is no longer the word I use to describe how I feel about God. Now I use words like reverent intimacy. I still fear God, and I pray that I always will. The Bible emphasizes the importance of fearing God. As we talked about in chapter 1, our culture severely lacks the fear of God, and many of us are plagued with amnesia. But for a long time, I narrowly focused on His fearsomeness to the exclusion of His great and abounding love.” Francis Chan p. 57*

## Lesson 2: Things that Inhibit Breathing

*Supplies needed: 1 coffee stirrer for each student, Dvd with video: The Fall.*

*Illustration Activity: Give all of the students a coffee stirrer and have them breathe through it while pinching their nose so that the air through the stirrer is all that they breathe. After everyone breathes this way for a little while have them do something aerobic such as run in place or do jumping jacks, while still only breathing through the stirrer.*

*Leader: In this lesson we are going to talk about the things that hurt our ability to breathe spiritually. In the same way that you could breathe through the stirrer but not really well, we have things in our lives that stop us from fully breathing spiritually and being able to fully experience the joy that Jesus came to give us.*

Read John 16:7-11

According to this passage what is one role of the Helper? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why would Jesus say that it is better for us that he leave and send the helper? \_\_\_\_\_

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“God wants to fill us with his Holy Spirit, but when we are proud we are already full of ourselves. There’s no room for God.” Cornelius Plantinga Jr.<sup>viii</sup> p. 82

Can you think of a sin that does not stem from a root of pride? \_\_\_\_\_

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*We are going to look at some passages from Romans. Romans was written by the Apostle Paul. Most of the books written by Paul were written to churches that he either started or knew personally. So the letters deal with specific issues that relate to that group of Christians. Romans, however, is written to a group of Christians whom Paul has not yet met. He is writing to them and painting the big picture of what matters in the Christian life. In a sense he is telling them how to make sure they are breathing spiritually and correctly. As we read these passages let’s equate death with the inability to breathe and life with breath.*

Read Romans 3:23

Who is affected by the inability to breathe, by sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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“The Bible presents sin by way of major concepts, principally lawlessness and faithlessness, expressed in an array of images: sin is the missing of a target, a wandering from the path, a straying from the fold. Sin is a hard heart and a stiff neck. Sin is blindness and deafness. It is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it – both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is a beast crouching at the door. In sin, people attack or evade or neglect their divine calling. These and other images suggest deviance: even when it is familiar, sin is never normal. Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to divine restoration of that harmony. Above all, sin disrupts and resists the vital human relation to God, and it does all this disrupting and resisting in a number of intertwined ways.” – Cornelius Plantiga Jr.<sup>ix</sup>

Read Romans 5:12-13

How did death (the inability to breathe) come into the world? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Romans 5:14-17

How does being born again as discussed in lesson 1 relate to the free gift talked about here? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Whatever we say about sin will qualify whatever we say about grace.”  
– Cornelius Plantiga<sup>x</sup>

How does your view of sin relate to your view of grace? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Ephesians 2:8-9

What is grace? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Romans 6:12-14

Do you ever feel like you are stuck doing things that you know are bad for you and prevent you from breathing spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you under law and bondage to sin, or are you under grace? \_\_\_\_\_

*If grace then you have been set free. However if you continue fall into sin you should know that you are not alone.*

*Watch video: The Fall (on dvd and available at:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIVcUtzlcnQ>*

Read Romans 7:15-20

What do you think about the fact that Apostle Paul even says that there are times when he does things that are just not what he wants to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you feel this war between two allegiances going on in your body? When? \_\_\_\_\_

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If you ever wonder if you are alive and breathing because you are being convicted of sin, how would it change your thinking if you consider the facts that the Holy Spirit is the one that convicts of sin, and the Holy Spirit comes to those who are born again? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Romans 8:1-6

Have you been set free or are you still in bondage to sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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If we have been set free why do we keep letting sin creep up into our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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*In talking about sin it is easy to miss the mark in two ways: 1<sup>st</sup> making things that aren't sin into sin; 2<sup>nd</sup> trivializing sin.*

“Groups have a tendency to be exclusive. Insiders want to separate themselves from outsiders. So they adopt boundary markers. These are highly visible, relatively superficial practices – matters of vocabulary or dress or style – whose purpose is to distinguish between those inside a group and those outside.” – John Ortberg<sup>xi</sup>

Do you think that your church or your youth group has boundary markers that are equated with sin but are not really things that inhibit spiritual breathing? What would some be? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you know if something really inhibits your spiritual breath or if it is just group mentality? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Lukewarm People do whatever is necessary to keep themselves from feeling too guilty. They want to do the bare minimum, to be ‘good enough’ without it requiring too much of them. They ask, ‘How far can I go before it’s considered a sin?’ instead of ‘How can I keep myself pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit?’ They ask, ‘How much do I have to give?’ instead of ‘How much can I give?’ They ask, ‘How much time should I spend praying and reading my Bible?’ instead of ‘I wish I didn’t have to go to [school], so I can sit here and read longer!’” – Francis Chan<sup>xii</sup>

Do you find yourself asking the questions of what is required instead of how can I give more of my time and money? \_\_\_\_\_

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“We know that when we sin, we pervert, adulterate, and destroy good things. We create matrices and atmospheres of moral evil and bequeath them to our descendents. By habitual practice, we let loose a great, rolling momentum of moral and spiritual evil across generations. By doing such things, we involve ourselves deeply in what theologians call corruption.” – Cornelius Plantinga<sup>xiii</sup> p. 27

*Close in Prayer.*

## Lesson 2: Extra Material

- “On the diagnostic side, sin can be divided into two general categories: sins of omission and sins of commission. Sins of omission involve not doing those things we ought to do; sins of commission consist of things we do that we ought to avoid.” – Ortberg p. 57
- “Following Jesus cannot be done at a sprint. If we want to follow someone, we can’t go faster than the one who is leading.” – Ortberg p. 79
- “Sin is not only the breaking of law but also the breaking of covenant with one’s savior. Sin is the smearing of a relationship, the grieving of one’s divine parent and benefactor, a betrayal of the partner to whom one is joined by a holy bond.” – Plantiga p. 12
- “Evil is first disconcerting and then lethal.” – Plantiga p. 50
- “Ultimately, the only human beings we know are people who have been created to please God and build shalom but who, to a greater or lesser degree, mysteriously live against the purpose of their existence.” – Plantiga p. 73
- “A main problem with pride is that it recognizes neither sin nor grace; in fact, pride hammers them flat and discards them.” Plantiga p. 84
- “The reason is that sin is a parasite, an uninvited guest that keeps tapping its host for sustenance. Nothing about sin is its own; all its power, persistence, and plausibility are stolen goods. Sin is not really an entity but a spoiler of entities, not an organism but a leech on organisms. Sin does not build shalom; it vandalizes it.” Plantiga p. 89
- “[Y]ou have to stop loving and pursuing Christ in order to sin. When you are pursuing love, running toward Christ, you do not have opportunity to wonder, *Am I doing this right?* or *Did I serve enough this week?* When you are running toward Christ, you are freed up to serve, love, and give thanks without guilt, worry, or fear. As long as you are running, you are safe.” Chan p. 104

## Lesson 3: Clearing the Airways

*Supplies needed: none*

“Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy.... He who is alone with his sins is utterly alone. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>xiv</sup>

*So we have talked already about being born again, taking that first breath. Then we discussed the things that inhibit us from breathing. In this lesson we are going to discuss how we go about removing those things that inhibit our breathing.*

Do you ever feel like in your church that you are supposed to act like you have it all together and that you never sin or mess up? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Let’s face it. We’re willing to make changes in our lives only if we think it affects our salvation. That is why I have so many people ask me questions like, Can I divorce my wife and still go to heaven? Do I have to be baptized to be saved? Am I a Christian even though I’m having sex with my girlfriend? If I commit suicide, can I still go to heaven? If I’m ashamed to talk about Christ, is He really going to deny knowing me? To me, these questions are tragic because they reveal much about the state of our hearts. They demonstrate that our concern is more about going to heaven than loving the King. Jesus said, ‘If you love me, you will obey what I command’ (John 14:15). And our question quickly becomes even more unthinkable: *Can I go to heaven without truly and faithfully loving Jesus?* . . . –Francis Chan<sup>xv</sup>

Read James 5:16

When do you practice this in your Christian life? \_\_\_\_\_

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In hospitals when a person is immobilized for a long period of time there is a good chance that they will have fluid build up in their lungs, many patients develop pneumonia due to this fact alone. The solution to this problem is that nurses come in every two hours and make the patients move around and cough and then breathe deeply. This is called the “turn-cough-deep breathe” procedure. This is a conscious, constant, and consistent approach to removing the impure build up so that a patient can breathe fresh, pure air.

*As we covered in the last lesson, our spiritual lungs can collect fluid and junk that prevents us from being able to breathe spiritually. This lesson is about getting that junk out. How do we go about having a spiritual “turn-cough-deep breathe” procedure?*

We are going to look at Psalm 51 in this lesson. This is a psalm that David wrote after he was caught in sin. David committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba. Then when he found out she was pregnant, he got Uriah, her husband, drunk and tried to get him to go home to lay with his wife so that he would think that the child was his. Uriah did not do as David had hoped, so he sent him into battle with the order that he be killed. Then David took Bathsheba as his wife all trying to cover his sin. About that time the prophet Nathan showed up and accused him of the wrong doing that he thought he had hidden so well. Talk about a guy having some stuff blocking his spiritual airways.<sup>xvi</sup>

*So it was after David’s great sin, that he is forever known for, that David writes Psalm 51. He really gives us a great picture in this psalm of how to clear your spiritual airways.*

Read Psalm 51:1-2

How does David start the process of clearing the airways? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does David seem to think that he can clear his airways himself? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and justification before God through obedience to God. A legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn God’s forgiveness through personal performance.” C.J. Mahaney<sup>xvii</sup>

*The temptation when we find ourselves in sin, which is restricting our spiritual airflow, is to try to do enough good stuff to counterbalance the bad so that we can fix the problem ourselves. This is legalism, this is not grace based Christianity. We need to do what David finally did after trying to cover up his sin, he turned to God and asked him to fix it, to make him new.*

Read Psalm 51:3-4

Who does David blame for his sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Confession means saying that somewhere in the mix was a choice, and the choice was made by us, and it does not need to be excused, explained, or even understood. The choice needs to be forgiven. The slate has to be wiped clean.” – John Ortberg<sup>xviii</sup>

Read Psalm 51:7-10

Does David believe that he can really be made clean? \_\_\_\_\_

How are our spiritual airways cleared? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the end result that David is hoping for? \_\_\_\_\_

The inability to accept the reality of forgiveness is the reason that God has given us the practice of confession. Sometimes people wonder, *If I'm a Christian and God has already forgiven me, why should I have to confess?* This is looking at confession the wrong way. Confession is not primarily something God has us do because he needs it. God is not clutching tightly to his mercy, as if we have to pry it from his fingers like a child's last cookie. We need to confess in order to heal and be changed."

– John Ortberg<sup>xix</sup>

Read Psalm 51:11-12

*This part of the passage reminds us that repentance is not just for us to one time at the point when we are born again. David has already experienced the joy of the Lord's salvation. He just is not breathing it any more.*

*A question could be raised from this verse about eternal security. Is it possible for a Christian to lose their salvation, for the Holy Spirit to leave them? This is a tough question that is hard to deal with quickly, but a couple of things to consider: 1. David was in a different dispensation (time period in salvation history): The Holy Spirit did not have permanent residence in humans before Pentecost but would come upon men for them to do the work of God. 2. Look up John 6:35-37, John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 2:13, and 1 John 5:4-5.*

Is there something that you need for God to remove so that you can taste the fresh air of the joy of salvation again? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you ever wonder why God left us here? Why are we not just whisked away to heaven at the moment that we are born again? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Psalm 51:13-15

How can God use the junk that has clogged your airways to help others? \_\_\_\_\_

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“When we practice confession well, two things happen. The first is that we are liberated from guilt. The second is that we will be at least a little less likely to sin in the same way in the future than if we had not confessed. Sin will look and feel less attractive.”

– John Ortberg<sup>xx</sup>

Once your airways are clear, what are you going to do with them? Put the same junk back in them or use your new breath to praise the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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Leading up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing there was great concern over the air quality. Smog includes pollutants in the air, more specifically high levels of particulate matter including ozone and nitrogen oxides. High levels of these pollutants can be lethal to humans causing heart attacks and strokes. So, there was great concern for the world’s top athletes competing in a city that is known to have 10 times the smog level of other cities such as Chicago. Beijing took this situation seriously and shut down much of the industry and other contributors to the smog levels to help the athletes and spectators have clean air to breathe. In other words they changed the atmosphere to eliminate the problem.

*Repentance, clearing your spiritual airways, involves not only admitting your guilt and seeking forgiveness, but it involves changing your atmosphere so that you do not continue to fall into the same sin over and over again.*

Is there something in the atmosphere of your life that you need to remove so that you can breathe better? What? \_\_\_\_\_

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*When we are dealing with sin it is easy to fall into guilt and condemnation for sin that has already been forgiven. Have the students consider the following three errors when dealing with sin.*

C.J. Mahaney offers three ways we can go wrong when dealing with sin and our relationship with God:

1. *Subjectivism*, which means basing our view of God on our changing feelings and emotions.
2. *Legalism*, which means basing our relationship with God on our own performance.
3. *Condemnation*, which means being more focused on our sin than on God's grace."

– C.J. Mahaney<sup>xxi</sup>

Can you see any of these three errors in your approach to sin and repentance? Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Close in prayer.*

## *Lesson 3: Extra Material*

- *His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3). His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). I'm not saying that when you mess up, it means you were never really a genuine Christian in the first place. If that were true, no one could follow Christ.* –Chan p. 88
- *John 15:1-17*
- *Psalm 38*
- *“One of the hardest things in the world is to stop being the prodigal son without turning into the elder brother. So how can humility be pursued?” – Ortberg p. 113*

## Lesson 4: The Air I Breathe

*Supplies Needed: Dvd with Smarter Every Day Episode about air volume under pressure.*

*So far we have talked about the first breath, the things that clog our airways, and how to clear our airways once they are clogged. In this lesson we are going to talk about the way that we actually breathe spiritually. What are the things that we can do in our personal lives to spiritually breathe and not only that but to also breathe deeper and better.*

“To grow spiritually means to live increasingly as Jesus would in our unique place – to perceive what Jesus would perceive if he looked through our eyes to think what he would think, to feel what he would feel, and therefore to do what he would do.”

– John Ortberg<sup>xxii</sup>

What are ways in which we can grow spiritually? How can we breathe deeper spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_

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*The Apostle Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy with instructions as Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. His instructions for Timothy are very applicable for us today in our learning how to breathe spiritually.*

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-7a

What is the difference between “the words of the faith and good doctrine” and “irreverent, silly myths?” \_\_\_\_\_

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How can we know the difference between good doctrine and myths? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does doctrine relate to spiritually breathing? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read 1 Timothy 4:7b-8

The word translated as train, exercise, or discipline (depending on your translation) is the greek word Γύμναζε (Gymnaze) where we get our word Gymnasium and thus gym. So Paul is telling Timothy in essence it is good to work out your muscles, but it is way better to work out your spiritual muscles. Or, we could say it is good to physically breathe deeply but it is better to spiritually breathe deeply.

How do you physically exercise? How much? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you spiritually exercise? How much? \_\_\_\_\_

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“I remember that if I stop pursuing Christ, I am letting our relationship deteriorate. We never grow closer to God when we just live life; it takes deliberate pursuit and attentiveness. When I pray, I sometimes ask God to make it the most intimate time of prayer I’ve ever had. Many times when I speak, whether at my church or another venue, I remind myself that I could die right after I finish, so what would I want my last words to be?” – Francis Chan<sup>xxiii</sup>

Read 2 Timothy 4:13

2 Timothy is most likely the last thing what we have that was written by Paul. He is on up in age at this point, and yet he asks Timothy to bring him his books and parchments. These most likely contained scripture and words of spiritual nourishment.

What can we learn from the fact that Paul instructed Timothy his protégé and a fellow pastor to train in godliness, and he himself at the end of his life requested spiritual documents? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you training yourself like Paul instructed and demonstrated? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Respecting the distinction between training and merely trying is the key to transformation in every aspect of life. People sometimes think that learning to play Bach at the keyboard by spending years practicing scales and chord progressions is the ‘hard’ way. The truth is the other way around. Spending years practicing scales is the easy way to learn to play Bach. Imagine sitting down at a grand piano in front of a packed concert hall and having never practiced a moment in your life. That’s the hard way.”

– John Ortberg<sup>xxiv</sup>

What is the difference in training and trying when it comes to spiritually breathing? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you been training or trying to breathe spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Watch Smarter Every Day Episode about scuba diving and air volume under pressure.*

Just like in scuba diving, the deeper you go spiritually the more you can breathe in. The mistake that many people make in developing a spiritual training plan is that they try to go deeper than they are ready to breathe.

What are your training goals for your spiritual life? What would you like to accomplish?

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Read 2 Peter 1:5-8

Did you put ineffective or unfruitful on your list of goals? \_\_\_\_\_

Look back over the list of qualities that Peter instructs us to have. Which of the qualities really need attention in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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*At first glance it seems like Peter is saying that we need to fully accomplish one quality and then move on to the next, but in vs. 8 Peter clarifies that all of these qualities are ours and are increasing.*

Are you growing in all of these areas right now? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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“Our primary task is not to calculate how many verses of Scripture we read or how many minutes we spend in prayer. Our task is to use these activities to create opportunities for God to work. Then what happens is up to him. We just put up sails: ‘The wind blows where it chooses. . . .’” – John Ortberg<sup>xxv</sup>

What are some ways that can you can lift up the sails for the wind of God? \_\_\_\_\_

*Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning- are some ways taught by Donald Whitney in Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, which is a great book to recommend if your students are wanting something to study following this weekend.*

“When we are focused on loving Christ, it doesn’t mean we do less. I used to do many of the same things I do now, but I was motivated by guilt or fear or consequences. When we work for Christ out of obligation, it feels like work. But when we truly love Christ, our work is a manifestation of that love, and it feels like love.” –Francis Chan<sup>xxvi</sup>

What is the difference in doing something out of love or out of work? \_\_\_\_\_

Do we ever have to work at love? \_\_\_\_\_

Read 1 Timothy 4:10 and 2 Peter 1:8

What is the last virtue that Peter mentions? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Paul tell Timothy is the reason for all of the toiling and striving? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it look like to toil and strive inside the bounds of love? \_\_\_\_\_

“Every moment of my life is an opportunity to learn from God how to live like Jesus, how to live in the Kingdom of God.” –John Ortberg<sup>xxvii</sup>

*Close in Prayer*

## Lesson 4: Extra Material

- *“Discipline: Any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me do what I cannot now do by direct effort.” – Ortberg p. 47*
- *“Spiritual discipline: Any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it.” – Ortberg p. 48*
- *“A disciplined person is someone who can do the right thing at the right time in the right way with the right spirit.” – Ortberg p. 50*
- *“Once the game starts, basketball players get no bonus points based on how many free throws they shot in practice. The only reason to practice them is to be able to make them in a game.” – Ortberg p. 45*
- *“C.S. Lewis wrote that in prayer we must ‘lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.’” –Ortberg p. 101*
- *“Jesus was the most disciplined Man who ever lived and yet the most joyful and passionately alive. He is our Example of discipline. Let us follow Him to joy through the Spiritual Disciplines.” – Whitney p. 24*
- *“There are many good resources for learning how to pray, but the best way to learn how to pray is to pray.” – Whitney p. 71*
- *“The great fault of the children of God is, they do not continue in prayer; they do not go on praying; they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God’s glory, they should pray until they get it.” –George Muller quoted in Whitney p. 81*
- *John 14:15-31- holy spirit and obedience*

## Lesson 5: The Air We Breathe

*Supplies Needed: paper, tape, pens*

The following is an all too common of a story: Two brothers Taylor and Bob both went to a Christian conference. These two brothers were both very fired up for the Lord at this conference. They both made commitments about how things in their lives were going to change. Well after a year Taylor was really breathing deeper and walking closely with the Lord; his spiritual depth was far beyond what it was before the conference. Bob on the other hand fell right back into the way things were before the conference. What was the difference with these two brothers?

Taylor plugged himself in with a group of Christians who were committed to the same goals in their lives as he was. Taylor found a Godly man who was much further along in his sanctification (the process of becoming more like Christ) and that man started discipling him. Taylor did not try to do it all alone.

Bob, on the other hand, returned from the conference and while his zeal remained he was breathing pretty well, but soon the zeal wore off and there were no changes in his surroundings. He had no one else to spur him toward God. He continued to surround himself with the same influences as before, and there was no lasting change in his life.

*Hopefully at this point your group has grown in their spiritual journey. The hope for this lesson is for the students to discuss and have a plan as to how they can help each other continue to breathe. Hopefully they will see the need that they have for the church and how the church is suppose to function.*

Read 1 Timothy 6:11-16

*Remember that this is the Apostle Paul writing to his apprentice Timothy whom he left in Ephesus to pastor the church there. (1 Timothy 1:3)*

Does this passage apply to you in the same way that it did to Timothy? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who do you have in your life that would serve the role of spurring you on toward Godliness like Paul is doing for Timothy here? \_\_\_\_\_

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It has been said that every Christian needs a Paul and a Timothy. Who is in your life that you are pouring into like Paul is into Timothy? \_\_\_\_\_

How do we find these people in our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Ephesians 2:19-22

*Remember this was written to the same group of Christians that Timothy was left to pastor in 1 Timothy. Paul here is using the imagery of a building to communicate to Christians how they are connected.*

In building houses completely out of stone the most important stone is the cornerstone. This stone has to have a perfect right angle or the entire building will not line up and will fall apart.

What are the implications of Jesus being the cornerstone of the church? \_\_\_\_\_

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If you are a Christian, consider yourself as a stone in this building that God is building. How will this change the way that you live your life? Spend your time? \_\_\_\_\_

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How much use is a stone in building a building that does not want to have anything to do with the other stones, a stone that stands off by itself? Is that stone fulfilling its role in the building? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Galatians 5:13-15

What has your experience been with the church? Have you experienced loving and serving one another or have you experienced biting and devouring one another? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which role have you taken on? Do you demonstrate love or devouring? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read John 13:31-32

*Here at the end of his life, Jesus explains the reason for his impending death. He does not say that it is because he loves these sinners so much, no he says it is for God's glory.*

How do you see your life as a Christian fitting into glorifying God? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can we as Christians bring glory to God? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read John 13:34-35

What commandment does Jesus give us in order for us to glorify God? \_\_\_\_\_

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When people look at the way that you relate to other Christians, would they know that you are a disciple of Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

Do you ever feel like to be a Christian means to be just like (fill in the blank)? \_\_\_\_\_

How does that change if you consider the fact that Christians are all one body, but different parts? \_\_\_\_\_

What part of the body do you think you are? \_\_\_\_\_

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What gifts or talents do you have that can be used to benefit the body? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Have everyone tape a sheet of paper on their back. Give time for the group to go around and write anonymously on the other group members' paper gifts that they see in that person that God can use for building up his body.*

What gifts or talents do the other members of your group see you having for the body?

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Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26

How do you need the rest of the body? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you rejoice with and suffer with other members of the body? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who rejoices and suffers with you? \_\_\_\_\_

*Ask: Have you ever heard someone say, I love Jesus, I just don't like the church, or Christians?*

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 2:21-22, Ephesians 5:22-24

How do you think Jesus feels about someone saying, I love Jesus but I just don't care for his body, or his temple, or his bride? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Matthew 28:18-20

What is our mission as a body, a temple, and a bride? \_\_\_\_\_

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We need the whole body to be a part of this mission. What is your role? \_\_\_\_\_

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“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

*Close in prayer.*

## *Lesson 5: Extra Material*

- *“Something is wrong if you can’t serve the Lord with gladness. I can understand why the person who serves God only out of obligation doesn’t serve with gladness. I can understand why the person who serves God in an attempt to earn his way to Heaven doesn’t serve with gladness. But the Christian who gratefully acknowledges what God has done for him for eternity should be able to serve God cheerfully and with joy.” – Whitney p. 119-120*
- *“[T]he reason Paul worked so hard was because the only thing he loved more than serving God was God Himself. God supplies us with the power to serve Him.” – Whitney p. 126*
- *Time is limited John 9:4*

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- <sup>i</sup> Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 44-45.
- <sup>ii</sup> Francis Chan, *Crazy Love*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 2008), 67.
- <sup>iii</sup> Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1991), 87.
- <sup>iv</sup> Francis Chan, 61.
- <sup>v</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 26.
- <sup>vi</sup> John 15:11 (ESV).
- <sup>vii</sup> Francis Chan, 21.
- <sup>viii</sup> Cornelius Plantiga Jr, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 82.
- <sup>ix</sup> Cornelius Plantiga, 5.
- <sup>x</sup> Cornelius Plantiga, 6.
- <sup>xi</sup> John Ortberg, 31.
- <sup>xii</sup> Francis Chan, 76.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Cornelius Plantiga, 27.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted by John Ortberg, 127.
- <sup>xv</sup> Francis Chan, 86.
- <sup>xvi</sup> This is a paraphrase of 2 Samuel 11-12.
- <sup>xvii</sup> C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006), 112.
- <sup>xviii</sup> John Ortberg, 132.
- <sup>xix</sup> John Ortberg, 129.
- <sup>xx</sup> John Ortberg, 130.
- <sup>xxi</sup> C.J. Mahaney, 111.
- <sup>xxii</sup> John Ortburg, 14.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Francis Chan, 170.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> John Ortberg, 43.
- <sup>xxv</sup> John Ortberg, 52.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Francis Chan, 111.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> John Ortberg, 21.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)