

Sunday, January 10, 2026 - Breathing in God – Pastor John Henry Raskin

Today's sermon explores the spiritual and physical significance of breathing, connecting our daily breaths to intentional spiritual living and our relationship with God.

1. The Gift and Miracle of Breath

- We breathe over 500 million times in a lifetime, often without noticing. Yet, each breath is a gift and a miracle, especially for those who have faced health challenges.

2. Intentionality in Breathing and Faith

- Just as intentional breathing sustains physical life and health, intentional spiritual breathing sustains a healthy walk with The Lord.
- The Hebrew name of God (YHWH) is said to echo in every breath we take—inhale "YH", exhale "WH". Practicing this intentionally can make each breath a prayer.

3. Spiritual Respiration

- Inhale God's life, love, power, and presence; exhale fear, doubt, sin, and worldly concerns. Each breath becomes a conscious connection to God.

4. Scriptural Foundations

- Genesis 2:7 - "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."
- Job 32:8 - "But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding."
- Luke 23:4 - "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last."
- John 20:22 - "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"
- 2 Timothy 3:16 - "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." ("inspiration" means "God-breathed").

5. Living Out the Breath of God

- Begin each day with intentional time with God—before distractions arise. Use breathing as a spiritual practice to connect with God's Spirit.
- Prayer becomes as natural as breathing. "Pray without ceasing" is possible when we link each breath to God's Spirit.
- When challenges or negative emotions arise, pause, breathe out the world, and breathe in God's Spirit.

6. Community and Encouragement

- We are created for community. Sharing stories and practicing spiritual disciplines together helps us stay spiritually "oxygenated" and encouraged.

Practical Application

- Practice intentional breathing: Inhale God's presence, exhale your worries.
- Start your day with God: Before anything else, spend quiet time in meditative prayer and scripture.
- Check in with God throughout the day: Use moments of pause to breathe in God and reconnect.
- Encourage others: Share your journey and support your faith community.

Every breath is an opportunity to receive God's life and to release what holds you back. Let your breathing become a living prayer, connecting you to the Spirit and empowering you to share God's love with others.

BREATHING IN GOD

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we began the new year by talking about how serving the Lord with intention can become our joy and is the key to fulfilling our purpose on earth.

Today I'd like to talk about intentionality in another aspect of our life on earth as it pertains to our walk with Jesus.

Let's talk about breathing.

Breathing is something that we usually take for granted.

That's not surprising when you consider that the average person breathes 20,000 times in a single day.

Psalm 90 tells us that a person's average lifespan is "three score years and ten" or 70 years, so let's use that as a baseline.

That means that in an average lifetime, a person would breathe 511 million times so it is understandable that we would take our breathing for granted.

That said, some of us have experienced traumatic occasions when our breathing was interrupted either physically or medically.

In those moments we become keenly aware of the close connection between our next breath and life itself.

Others of us have medical conditions that compromise our lungs, making each breath precious and giving us a renewed appreciation for normal breathing.

I have a condition known as emphysema and have learned a technique for those times when I get short of breath.

I take a deep breath in and then exhale, with my lips pursed, for a period of time approximately twice as long as the breath I took in.

That action expands things in my lungs known as bronchioles which carry oxygen to my bloodstream so that the volume of air that I take in sends more oxygen to my body.

I have learned to be very intentional about this purse lipped breathing technique when I get short of breath.

It's part of the reason why I have the stamina every Sunday to set up the sound system for the worship team, rehearse the band for 45 minutes, lead worship for 20 minutes, and then give you the Word.

The radiologists have said that according to what they see from pictures of my lungs I should be breathing hard and having to sit down just putting on my pants in the morning.

That is patently not the case.

At this juncture I will say that it is strictly the grace of God that sustains me and He gives me strength in my physical body for whatever it is He has called me to do however and whenever the call arises.

But it is also the grace of God that I happened to have met a nurse practitioner who taught me the purse lipped breathing technique and it is the Holy Spirit that lets me know to be intentional whenever I need to use it.

As one who has seen many miracles I can tell you that when and if God chooses to heal me, I will be absolutely joyful to receive it in faith.

However, until that moment, should He choose that for me, it is my intention to be aware not only of the need to use this technique in my physical breathing but also to be intentional about the breath of God which sustains my spirit by the power of His Spirit.

That's what I really want to talk to you about today.

Breathing in God.

The Hebrew word for “God” is most often referred to as “Jehovah” or “Yahweh”

In Hebrew, however, the name of God is the “unpronounceable name”.

It does not have vowels and is known in Greek as the tetragrammaton.

The actual word in the Hebrew is YHWH

4 letters with no vowels, which for us as English speakers is impossible to pronounce.

But here is what the ancient Hebrew scholars say about the tetragrammaton.

They say that the name of God is actually sounded out with every breath.

For just a moment sit still and quiet and listen to your breath and exaggerate it a little so you can hear it.

Form the letter Y with your mouth as you breath in the air

Inhale...YH

And form the W with your mouth as you blow it out...

Exhale...WH

To me, it feels like normal, though purposeful breathing.

Breathing the Name of God intentionally.

We often encourage you to be intentional about your alone time with God first thing in the morning before the day gets busy and distractions begin.

If at all possible, it's certainly a good practice to pick up your Bible before you pick up your phone and start scrolling through the news or if your Bible app is on your phone to make that your first stop.

For those of you who are fortunate enough to have a prayer closet or any place where you can just close your eyes and be alone with God that is a great place to begin your day before you even pick up your Bible or your Bible app on your phone.

That quiet time and place is the best time and place to practice intentional breathing and purposeful prayer.

Right now, I would like you to take a slow deep breath in.

Now let that deep breath out slowly and completely.

Inhale. Exhale.

Now meditate while you inhale.

As you Inhale: You are receiving God's life, love, power, and presence.

As you exhale: You are releasing fear, doubt, sin, and worldly concerns into God's Hands, allowing His Spirit to work.

This is a technique known as Spiritual Respiration:

In these quiet moments the Spirit comes, barely noticed even as we breathe in His New Life and breathe out our worldly cares.

Each breath becomes a conscious connection to God, a moment to breathe in His Spirit and breathe out His goodness.

Each breath awakens your spirit to what His Spirit is doing.

His breath bears us up, carries us forward, and connects us with ourselves, with creation and with God at the center of all things, the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

The very act of breathing that sustains life now becomes intentionally the breath of God in us, to us and through us.

In Genesis we see that God created man without life but then He gave us life by His breath.

Genesis 2:7

7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

In the book of Job, which some scholars believe to be the oldest book in the Bible, we see this scripture

Job 32:8

**8 But there is a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.**

So, we see that it is the Breath of God that makes us truly human, not only giving us life but the ability to believe in, comprehend and apprehend the nature and reality of God.

Jesus gave up His humanity with His last human breath.

Luke 23:46

6 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last.

Think of it! Jesus committed His human spirit into His Father's care as He breathed out His last human breath.

But can you imagine the power of His first resurrected breath being taken IN upon being raised to new and eternal life by the power of the Holy Spirit?

It was this new breath, God's breath, the pneuma in Greek, the Ruach in Hebrew that He then imparted to His disciples.

John 20:22

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus breathed on the disciples. He exhaled the resurrection power that raised Him to eternal life.

He was literally breathing out the life-giving, spirit-empowering Breath of God.

By breathing the Holy Spirit into the disciples, the Lord Jesus imparted Himself into them as new life.

The Holy Spirit is nothing less than the resurrected Lord Jesus Himself, because the Spirit is His breath.

Again, the word “pneuma” is translated and used for “breath, or spirit.”

Therefore, this verse can rightly be translated, “Receive the Holy Breath, receive the Breath of God.”

So, on the day of the resurrection, Jesus breathed Himself into His disciples as the Holy Breath.

How can you and I experience what the disciples experienced when Jesus breathed on them?

Remember what He said as He breathed, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

By breathing in God. Just surrender. Surrender and receive.

God’s breath is what brought Adam to life in the garden of Eden.

So, in a way, here in John’s Gospel Jesus was reenacting that scene from Genesis Chapter 2.

Adam didn’t have life until he received the Breath of God.

We don’t have new life, eternal life until we receive the Breath of God. The Spirit of Jesus.

The moment, though, that we receive Jesus’ breath in us is the moment we live forever.

We receive the Holy Spirit, the resurrected Christ.

When Jesus breathed out His last and then took in His first Holy Breath in the resurrection, He passed from death to life.

And because of His Breath in us, we pass from death to life.

We become as He is eternally.

Now what do we do with that?

When I'm breathing, I'm breathing in oxygen, and breathing out carbon dioxide.

I inhale; I exhale.

In other words, something from the outside comes into the inside and then something from the inside is released out.

Once we allow God to breathe life into us, In Christ, we breathe in Jesus and we breathe out Jesus.

When we are intentional about breathing in God first thing in the new day, then we are able to breathe out Jesus to the people in the world around us who are gasping for lack of spiritual oxygen.

A person is unable to speak without breath.

And we can't speak out spiritual truth without the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, Jesus, the very Word of God.

This is where your early morning time with the Bible comes in.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the Bible, inspiration (which comes from the Greek word "theopneustos", meaning "God-breathed") is the divine act where the Holy Spirit guided human authors to write God's message, making Scripture the authoritative Word of God.

God did this, ensuring accuracy and truth in their original writings while preserving the authors' personalities.

The Spirit's influence used their unique gifts of communication overshadowed by a supernatural influence ensuring that the text would convey God's thoughts perfectly, extending even to their choice of words, making it a reliable guide for faith and all aspects of a believer's life.

If we desire to be Christ's ambassadors on earth, then we must breathe in His Word just as we breathe in His Spirit so that we can breathe out His truth, the Gospel.

Now let's talk about breathing out prayer.

The apostle Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing.

I know that many of you have wondered how can I do that?

We know that if we cease to breathe, we cease to live.

Then it stands to reason that when we become intentional about breathing in the Holy Spirit, we are then more able to breathe out the prayers that He supplies.

As you build the habit of yielding yourself to the Spirit morning by morning, it becomes like breathing.

You will find yourself checking in with the Spirit hour by hour throughout the day.

As you travel from place to place, as you wait for someone, whenever you have a free moment, you can offer yourself to God:

“Here I am, Lord. Please let your Breath move in and through me to bless others.”

Whenever an emergency or challenge arises, you can lean on the Spirit:

Breathe in His peace and breathe out your requests...Give me wisdom, Spirit of God. Give me strength. Give me patience, bless that person.”

When unexpected circumstances arise, I often find myself asking “OK Lord what are we doing?”, letting Him know that I am available for whatever it is that He has for His servant in that moment.

If you sense that you’ve let something other than God’s Spirit fill you and direct you – anger, fear, prejudice, lust, greed, anxiety, pride, inferiority, or rivalry, for example –

Breathe God in, stop, humble yourself, acknowledge your misstep, and re-surrender to the Spirit.

Breathe out the world and breathe in His Spirit.

Since breathing is something that we always do and must do it stands to reason that being intentional about linking each breath to God's breath is a great way to stay connected to His Spirit.

Breathe in...breathe out.

Inhale God’s strength and wisdom for you through the Holy Spirit.

Exhale your struggles, your fears, your frustrations...

Pause to breathe intentionally throughout the day, reminding yourself to be present with God.

Pause to breathe, reminding yourself to check in with God, to rely on the Spirit of God for wisdom to navigate your day.

Pause to breathe and just be grateful for the breath of life – the breath of your physical life and the Pneuma breath of your spiritual life.

As you walk while breathing in the Spirit, you will pass through all kinds of terrain.

Sometimes the going gets difficult and you might forget to breathe in the Spirit intentionally no matter how much that might be your desire.

Remember this. You are not alone.

We are created with the need for community.

It helps when we are with people who share the same desire to breathe in God.

As a church family we should be intentional in encouraging one another and keeping one another accountable to keep breathing spiritually.

We can check in with each other and practice spiritual disciplines together.

I think it's important because our fire burns out more easily when we are striving on our own. We lose oxygen when we forget to breathe.

I like this quotation from a contemporary theologian...

“Along the way, each of us will have some stories to tell about our journey with Christ...stories of how the Spirit guided, empowered, inspired, restrained, sustained, and trained us in the fine art of being alive.

And that's another great blessing of being part of a community of faith. Along the way, we will gather around a table and share our stories about the journey so far.

We will share our joys and sorrows. We will share mistakes we've made and falls we've taken and lessons we've learned.

We will share ways in which we've experienced the Spirit moving in us, among us, and through us.

Through this sharing, we will encourage each other. And then we'll have strength to get back on the road."

Let's face it... we've all experienced the feeling of being on a long journey. We can feel tired, used up, out of breath...

and that's the time to stop and intentionally take a moment to breathe in God and tell a friend.

Let's Pray