

BREATH_Week 1: Intimacy and the Dash

Intro:

- The first time I got the breath knocked out of me and the ensuing panic
- Thinking about breathing too much and I couldn't breathe
- Thinking about what our breath smells like on our first date
- Being in the room when Jeff and Amy were born and watching for that first breath
- Being in the room with people I love in that holy moment when they breathed their last breath.
- Being so scared it takes our breath away (Amy and the Great Dane and the snake)
- Being so overwhelmed by something or someone that it takes your breath away (When Sheryll stepped through those doors in her wedding gown)

Breath is important, but it is also one of those things that are such a part of our lives that we sometimes take it for granted. Over the next few weeks we are going to talk about Breath, and how important it is, or more correctly, how important He is. The 3rd person of the Godhead, **the Holy Spirit, is actually the Holy Breath.**

- Ruach and Pneuma

Sometimes the differing streams within the Body of Christ have hijacked the Holy Spirit, distorting or misrepresenting Him:

- Cessationists who say He only works within present day Christians in natural ways and that His supernatural use of believers died with the last Apostle, basically turning Him into a tamed observer.
- Hyper-Charismatics who have turned Him into a mystical ghost who shows up to make us do weird things we don't want to do that scare small children and run off unbelievers.

As a result, many Christians are doing their best to walk out Christianity, but doing it by their own breath, instead of embracing the Holy Breath whose very reason for being on earth is to help us walk it out. **He is not an 'it', impersonal and detached.**

- He is the only member of the Godhead on earth today.
- He desires to inhabit every believer, immersing them into Christ and clothing them in His likeness.
- In Him we live and move and have our being. ***This is the air I breathe...***

Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

John 20:21-22 Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Breath is the substance of life, and the Breath of God, the Holy Spirit, lives in us to empower extraordinary life. What's the most important date on a tombstone? It's not the first date (our birthday), nor is it the last date (our death). It's the Dash—what happens between the birthday and the death.

Let's look again at those two passages and focus on something the Holy Spirit does if we will embrace Him in our lives. An ingredient to life that will make our Dash significant. Intimacy.

The word-pictures in Genesis 2 and John 20 are all about intimacy.

The Holy Spirit is the 'agent of intimacy'. He 'broods' over the chaotic earth, birthing by the Word of God, all of creation. He overshadows a young virgin named Mary and births the Messiah, Jesus. He comes on the Day of Pentecost and births the Church.

- We were created for intimacy with God and He desires intimacy with us.
- Genesis 2: An intimate act. Not a distant God holding up His clay model and blowing on it. This is God Almighty, having taken part of Himself and formed humans, now laying on that human face to face, eye to eye, nose to nose, mouth to mouth and breathing His very own breath—His life-giving Spirit—into His most treasured creation.
- Life in the Garden is a life of intimacy, lived fearlessly and openly with God, not for Him, but with Him.
- The goal of sin: break down the intimacy and the relationship begins to shrink. But, even in the sin, it's the Breath that lets us know there is a solution. For the God who gave us His breath to share intimacy with us, is also the God who will pour out His blood to restore intimacy with us. The angels with flaming swords placed at the entrance to the Garden are not there to protect the Garden **from** us, but they are there to protect the Garden **for** us!
- Jesus came to earth as a man to win us back to our Father, to woo us back to intimacy with Him. Listen to His words: "If you have seen me you have seen the Father. My Father and I are one. The Words I speak are given to me by the Father. Little children, your Father knows what you need. I go to prepare a place for you in our Father's house."
- Now look again at John 20: it is the Genesis 2 event again! It is Jesus restoring what has been stolen. This isn't some distant 'blow you a kiss' thing. He is alone with the disciples He loves so much. And they are so close to Him that they can feel His breath. And then He does what our Father did at creation—He gives us His Holy Breath—His life-giving Spirit! The ability to be intimate with our Father is restored!

Real intimacy is the bedrock of great relationships, and a lack of intimacy is most often the reason our relationships stink. In fact, without intimacy the only person with whom we will have a good relationship is ourselves, and even that relationship will be limited. A life filled with intimate relationships is a great life.

As Christians, we have learned to be polite with God, maybe even friendly. But what God desires, and what we most need, is real intimacy with God. That's where great life is found, that's what will permeate the rest of our life making the Dash count!

Real intimacy requires several things. Let's look at 3 and see how embracing Holy Spirit helps us with each:

Honesty: *John 16:12-14 "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will*

not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me."

When I am really intimate with someone, the truth is known. There are no secrets and no place to hide them. Think about your most truly intimate relationships—they know when you are lying. That's why we avoid them when we have secrets. If we get too close we will be exposed. **Secrecy** is the **enemy** of intimacy. We can't be intimate or we will be found out! The only people we want to be around are those who will help us hide. We might call them friends, but they aren't. In fact, they are helping us remain broken and dysfunctional.

Intimacy requires honesty. Honesty with God, myself and others.

The name Jesus uses most often for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. And Jesus said, "You shall know the Truth and the Truth will make you free!"

The Secret Place: Have you ever thought about why it's called that? It's the place where we bring and leave our secrets! If we will start being honest with God, we can get honest with ourselves, and then we will learn to be honest with each other. And when that happens, healing flows! ***There is a place that I know, I need more often to go...***

Willingness to Change: *John 14:23-24, 26 "Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me...But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you."*

When you get intimate with someone, change happens. When we quit changing, our relationships start dying. That's the difference is emotionalism, which is based on sensual satisfaction, and intimacy. Emotionalism doesn't require me to change. It's the reason some people can claim to have had great experiences with the Holy Spirit but are still mean, don't love the church, and are unstable. They had an emotional encounter but did not allow it to move toward intimacy because intimacy will always birth change.

- There were lots of cute girls I was emotional about as I grew up, but that didn't produce any change in me. But then there was Sheryl. I began to change immediately. (Which also tells you real intimacy is not dependent on sensual experiences although real intimacy will make our sensual experiences holy and fulfilling.)
- The Holy Spirit is constantly breathing on us, challenging us, even confronting us at times. The Truth challenges. Yes, he accepts us as we are, but Jesus didn't save us to simply make us better. He saved us to make us Christ-like and the Holy Spirit won't stop.
- So we either listen and obey, or we train ourselves to ignore Him and become complacent.

Complacency is the enemy of intimacy. The Bible says it hardens our heart, not just toward God but toward every relationship. Intimacy requires change and sometimes we either are afraid of change or think we are better off without it. So we become complacent. We must be desperate for God every day. Without the Holy Spirit breathing on us, in us and through us, we will lose our hunger for more of Jesus, our

hearts will become calloused, and we will settle for average. And before long, our whole life, and every relationship is average, on its way to mediocre. The Holy Spirit will keep you hungry for more of Jesus, desperate for His presence.

Note it's a willingness to change, not the ability to produce change. I am not the agent of change. That's why every recovery program that doesn't center on the power of the Holy Spirit will eventually fail. We'll do ok for a while, but eventually we will fail. Or we will change, but not the change God wants, and a change that requires a lot of maintenance

We may develop coping skills and learn to handle it with our will power, but we never find freedom and wholeness. There's always this thing that tells us at any moment we will slide back. Instead of a life lived free and fearless, excitedly asking God, "What's next Papa?", we live looking back, working hard to maintain any ground we have gained. Instead of a significant Dash, taking ground for the Kingdom, our Dash really becomes a little circle, circling the wagons around what I do have hoping not to lose it. We are not the agents of change, the Holy Spirit is.

2 Corinthians 3:18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

All we need to do is stay intimate with Him, close enough to fill His breath, and He will produce change.

Breathe on me, breathe on me. Holy Ghost power, breathe on me. Yesterday's gone, today I'm in need. Holy Ghost power breathe on me.

Time and Proximity: ***John 15:26-27 "But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry."***

Distance is the enemy of intimacy. Both physically and spiritually. When we allow anything to put distance between us and our Lord, between us and our spouse or our children, between us and our church, then intimacy is under attack and the relationship will shrink. Jesus warns us to watch out for this: distractions, obligations, hurts, wins and losses, priorities. All these things and more seek to drive a wedge between you and your intimacy with God. There's lot of 'good things' demanding our attention and energy, but if you will stay close enough to the Holy Spirit to feel His breath He will guide you to the 'God' things that will make the Dash count.

The Orbit Principle: Whatever is biggest in our life will draw us into orbit around it. It could be our kids, our spouse, our education, our hobby, our career. It's a law of physics. Whatever is biggest will use its gravitational pull to put smaller things into orbit around it. Make hunting or fishing the most important thing in your life, and there will be distance between you and your spouse and kids. Make your kids the most important thing in your life and there will be distance between you and your spouse.

Here's one I did when Sheryll and I first got married. We were involved in our church, helping lead. I worked a job that required me to work a half day on Saturday, so Sunday was my only off day. I began to make my off time the most important thing and before long I had put distance between me and my church, dragging my young wife

along with me into that orbit. Instead of working with kids or youth on Sundays, I was sleeping late. Nice Dash! Really significant. How would that sound on my tombstone: Here lies Tony Ashmore. He was born. He was well rested. And then He died.

John 16:14 (NLV) “He will honor (magnify and glorify) Me. He will receive what is Mine and will tell it to you.” The mission of the Holy Spirit: make Jesus the biggest thing in our lives, drawing us into an orbit around Him because that is where real life exists.

Holy Spirit you are welcome here. Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere. Your glory God is what our hearts longs, to be overcome by your presence Lord.

Psalm 150:6 “Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!”

The greatest gift we can give our Savior is a life well-lived, a life that honors Him. A “Dash” that counts for the Kingdom. A “Dash” filled with intimacy with God and others.

The Bible is very clear about our relationship with the Holy Spirit:

- He is the agent of our salvation.
- He is received as a subsequent experience after salvation.
- He must be received continually. He is not a ‘once and done’ experience.
- 3 Keys to an Intimate Relationship with Him:
 - **Repent:** Repentance is not something we do to get forgiveness. It’s what we do because we are forgiven. It’s a lifestyle and it becomes a joy to come before the altar of God and repent. The Book of Acts says it is where we will find our refreshment. Repent of our dishonesty and secrets from God. Repenting of areas where we have settled for less. Repenting for ignoring Him. Repenting for allowing distractions to put distance between us or rob Him of His time with me.
 - **Receive:** Receiving the Holy Spirit as He wants to come, not as I want to define His presence in me. Receiving Him and all He brings with Him, embracing His supernatural presence and all His gifts. Giving Him permission to challenge any area in me and yielding to His guidance, even if it makes me uncomfortable. I know He is more interested in my character than my comfort.
 - **Release:** Breathing is not just breathing in. Try it and you will fail. We breath in and we breath out. That’s how life flows through us. Allow Him to breath on, in you and through you. Expect Him to use you in the supernatural and embrace every opportunity. Allow Him to reproduce the life of Jesus in you, producing a Dash that honors Jesus!

The Holy Spirit wants every breath we breathe to count! Embrace Him and He will make your Dash significant!