

Breathing Room
Timeless
January 13, 2019

**Worship Songs – Reckless Love / Transition /
New Wine / T&G**

Behind the Scenes – Video

Feature – Days Go By

Good morning everyone.ⁱ

This is week two of our series called *Breathing Room* and you missed the first message last week, I want to let you know that we're talking about creating margin – creating space in your life *for life*.

We defined it last week as this; we said
...

“Breathing room” is the space between our current pace and our limits.

Breathing room is the space between our current pace – what we’re doing schedule-wise, how much money we’re spending, how we’re treating our body – and our ultimate limits.

Because physically, financially, and in terms of our time, we have limits. And, when there’s no space between our pace and our limits, we have no breathing room.

And when you live a life without breathing room, three bad things always happen:

1. There’s more stress and anxiety.
You worry about keeping up with

your schedule. You worry about your bank balance.

2. And you get hyper-focused on one or two things and exclude other things that are important.

3. And your relationships suffer. It's like your body is there, but your brain and your heart isn't. You don't listen well.

So, obviously life is better when you have breathing room.

Now, the cool thing about this – and you need to know this if you're not a Christian or a church person ... the cool thing about this is that *breathing room* is *actually* God's idea, which is surprising to most people because most

people think that the God of the Bible is a slave driver – “do this, don’t do that or else.”

But, as we saw last week (and you really should check out the message on our app or website or podcast if you weren’t here) ... as we saw last week, it’s exactly the opposite.

When God created the nation of Israel, they were coming out of 400 years of slavery and the only way they knew how to live was as slaves which meant “work all day every day.” That was life to them.

But not to God.

Because when God gave them commandments – rules on how to run

their new society – number three out of 600 or so was to take a day off every week.

“When the sun goes down on Friday evening,” God told them, “you stop working for twenty-four hours. You don’t pick another grape, you don’t harvest another olive. You lay down your tools and go inside. When the sun goes down, you go home and rest for 24 hours.”

“I’m making this a commandment because I designed you this way. You function better – *life is better* – when there is breathing room.”

Isn’t that amazing? The God of the Bible is such a slave driver that His number three rule for the new nation of Israel is

“every week take a day off and rest.”

Now, last week I said that even though the commandment about the Sabbath doesn't apply to us in the exact same way it did to them, *the principle behind it does.*

It applies because, in this commandment, God is describing what it looks like when people live in freedom instead of slavery ... which is what He wants for all of us. You and I are not meant to be slaves to anything or anyone. We're meant to be free.

So today, we're going to talk about how this principle applies to us; specifically, how we can gain some freedom time-

wise; how we can create some breathing room in our schedules.

And this is so critical because my inclination and your inclination is to cram more and more in without taking anything out *which means* ... we wind up *doing so much* that we don't *enjoy much* of what we're doing.

- We drive too fast.
- We eat in the car.
- We're at work and we're thinking, "I really need to be at home."
- Then we're at home and we're thinking, "I really need to be working."

- We can't say "no" to anything. Anything anybody wants us to do, we automatically say "yes."

And then our kids follow in our footsteps. They're looking at us thinking "oh, that's how you do it. That's normal." They're living the same way we live: *just keep cramming it all on to the calendar*. It's go, go, go, go all the time.

But, as the song put it, "in the race we run, we're coming undone."ⁱⁱ

Correct Context

So, today, we're going to talk about how to solve that, how to address that; and if this is *not* happening to you, how to *keep it* from happening.

And there are lots of approaches we might take but what we're going to do is talk about one thing – one big idea with one application that literally could change your life.

And I know that sounds like “preacher talk” but the reason it could change your life is because it will change the way you think about your time.

So here we go.

This big idea and its application comes from a portion of the Old Testament known as the Book of Psalms, specifically, Psalm 90. We're going to look at it in just a bit but, before we do, I need to tell you that it was written by the same guy who was at the center of

God leading Israel out of slavery and into freedom: *Moses*.

So why does that matter?

It matters because Moses lived to be 120 years old. Not only that, Moses had, in essence, four very different lives.

In the first part of his life, Moses was raised in Pharaoh's household as an adopted son. He was Hebrew, but he was raised as an Egyptian prince with all the wealth and privilege that goes along with it.

In the second part (which lasted 40 years), Moses was a shepherd. How he went from prince to shepherd is a story for another day but, the point is, his life was pretty boring and uneventful.

- Today, you take your sheep out.
- You sit and you watch the sun go across the sky while they do whatever sheep do.
- Then you round them up and put them back in the pen.
- And the next morning, you get up and do the same thing all over again.

40 years of that.

The third part of Moses life finds him back in Egypt – and this the part everyone pretty much knows.

Sent by God to demand the release of the Hebrew nation (you know, “Let my people go,” and the river turning to blood, and all those signs and wonders

and pestilence and plagues), Moses is God's mouthpiece ... which is odd because he doesn't speak very well.

But here he is at the epicenter of one of the biggest events in world history, where an entire nation – hundreds of thousands of people – are set free from slavery and begin their march to the Promised Land.

... which leads to the fourth part of his life where Moses is the leader of that nation for another 40 years.

There are moments of great glory (such as when God gives him the Ten Commandments on Mt. Saini) but, they are few and far between because, unfortunately, the people Moses leads are rebellious, disobedient, whiners and

complainers.

And the rest of his life is spent leading them around and around in the desert until he and his generation die off and their children enter the Promised Land.

Point is ... this dude has lived a long time and seen a lot of things – way more than any of us:

- From the highest of highs to the lowest of lows
- From the penthouse to the outhouse
- From the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat.
- From the adrenaline rush of deep political intrigue to the dull boredom of a desert existence.

And because of all that experience and

the length of his life, Moses has a unique perspective on time which, in the 90th Psalm, he shares with us in a prayer he wrote.

He begins by saying ...

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90:1-2 (NIV)

In other words, “on the timeline of human history, somehow, You God are found at both ends. You are everlasting to everlasting ... which also means that somewhere on a tiny dot between those two eternal endpoints of everlasting

and everlasting, there's me, Moses, and my people.”

And there's you and me as well.

Moses continues:

*A thousand years in your
sight are like a day that has
just gone by, or like a
watch in the night.*

Psalm 90:4 (NIV)

... or about three to four hours.

To God, a thousand years feels like the length of time you sleep before you wake up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom!

Moses continues:

Yet you sweep people away

*in the sleep of death—they
are like the new grass of
the morning. In the
morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and
withered. Psalm 90:5-6
(NIV)*

A little baby is born and we're like "Oh, he's so cute, she's so cute. They have their whole life ahead of them."

But in comparison to eternity, that baby's "whole life" is like weeds or wildflowers that pop up in the morning. They're green and maybe even beautiful but by late afternoon, they're gone.

Slide

*Our days may come to
seventy years, or eighty, if
our strength endures; yet*

the best of them are but trouble and sorrow for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Psalm 90:10 (NIV)

Now, this next part of Moses' prayer is a bit confusing at first.

He prays:

If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. Psalm 90:11 (NIV)

This is a difficult verse to translate from Hebrew into English (which is why there are lots of different versions of it in the various translations) but, in essence, what it means is this:

If we could see God as He truly is – in all His

power and righteousness and holiness, we would give Him the reverence He is due.

So let's summarize what Moses is saying so far.

“God, you're eternal – from everlasting to everlasting. But all of us are like a piece of grass. We're here today, gone tomorrow. Our lives are like boom, boom, boom. To us, it's all going by so fast.

“But if we think it's going by fast, in light of *Your* existence and power, our lives are not even a fraction of a second. To you, a thousand years feels like three or four hours.”

Then Moses pauses in this big picture he's painting and says, “if we could somehow see God as He is, then when it

comes to spending the time we have, we would give him the reverence that He is due.

“Because if I only have a tiny, tiny, tiny, little, itty-bitty slice of time to do something with, wouldn’t it be the rational, logical, correct thing to somehow in my little itty-bitty blip of existence give God the glory He’s due?”

Of course it would.

If we saw God for who He is and realized that He gave us life and gave us time and He is everlasting to everlasting and we’re only here today and gone tomorrow, then the wise thing to do would be to rethink what we do with this gift of limited time that we have been given.

But the truth is that *you and I don't think like that*. We *don't* look at the context of our life in the big picture of God and eternity.

Instead, we think “the context of my life is my life.”

But Moses, with all of his longevity and all of his vast experience, says “no, the context of your life *isn't* your life. The context of your life is from everlasting to everlasting. Your life is just a tiny, tiny, tiny, scratch on a really, really, really, long, long, long timeline.”

You really don't have very much time.

And that's the big idea that can change your life.

Numbered Days

Now, the reason Moses is spelling all of this out in his prayer is that when you realize that; when you truly grasp the brevity of your life and the fact that your time is limited, it will cause you to think differently about spending it ...

... which brings us to his unique and amazing application of the big idea.

And this is so wise how Moses applies it. It's so humble.

The very next thing Moses says to God in this prayer is ...

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12
(NIV)

Would you do me a favor and read that out loud with me?

Moses humbly prays “teach us” because we don’t do this naturally.

“We need your help, God. We need you to teach us to live as if our days are numbered.”

A few nights ago, Jetta and I were talking about her retirement from teaching, which is something she wants to do in the next year or so. And she said, “on the one hand, I’m excited about it but, on the other, it means that I’m kind of coming to the final phase of my life. And that feels a little scary because

I didn't think I'd be here this soon.”

And we talked about how you live through a phase – like having kids and raising kids and seeing them start school and then move away and then get married – and, every time, it comes as a surprise when the phase is over.

And I'm sure you've experienced something similar.

But why are we surprised? I think it's because we live as if we are timeless. We live as if we're going have this life forever. We spend our time as if our time is unlimited.

But Moses says “no, no, no; it's a huge mistake. You need to learn to number your days, which means learn to live as

if your days are numbered.”

Now, you’ve done this before in other areas of your life.

If you are a woman and you are married or have ever been married, you did this because you had a wedding day.

- From the time you knew what day you were going to be married, you began to number your days.
- You knew exactly how many days until you were the bride.
- You knew exactly what you had to get done, and you organized the time between the time you said, “I will,” before you said, “I do.”

In that interval of time, you lived your life in light of the fact that there was a time period that was going to come to an end – day you would be married.

If you're a student and you wanted to make a good grade, when the teacher told you when the exam was going to be, you thought:

- “Okay I’ve got two weeks to study, so I need to do this.
- “Now, I’ve got only one week left, so I need to do that.”

You knew that the opportunity to study would eventually come to an end, so you numbered your days.

If you’ve ever faced a deadline, you

know what it means to number your days. You knew that time would run out. Opportunity would run out. There would be a point at which you could no longer prepare for whatever it was.

So you numbered your days to meet that deadline.

And Moses, in his prayer is asking, “Lord, would You help us *to live our entire life* that way?”

But remember, that’s not the whole request. Moses adds one more thing which seems like a bit of a tag-on but it’s not.

“Teach us to number our days,” he prays, “so *that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*”

Teach us to live as if our days are numbered, because in living as if our days are numbered, we will gain wisdom as to what we should put in to our days, what we should leave out of our days, and what should be the priority of those days.

We'll start thinking, "You know, I really can't spend my time doing *that*. And I need to spend more time doing *that*. And I need to spend no time doing *that*."

So, if you wanted to summarize and personalize a takeaway at this point it would be this:

Our time is limited, so we need to limit how we spend our time.

Our time is limited, so we need to limit how we spend our time. We need to be careful with it.

When each of our girls reached high school, Jetta and I stopped paying for their expenses.

We knew how much we had been spending on their lunches and activities and clothes and makeup. And we estimated what it would cost for gasoline and other things teenaged girls need (including money to give to the Lord and His work).

And every month on the first of the month, we gave them that amount and we said “that’s it. Spend it however you want but when it’s gone it’s gone.”

It was amazing what happened. Those girls turned into tightwads!

- They learned to make their lunches instead of buying them.
- They started shopping at thrift stores instead of The Gap.
- They bought retreads instead of Doc Martins.

They became very careful with their money.

Why? Because they understood the limits of their resources. And when you know you have a limited resource, you are careful.

When you think you have an endless

supply, you're not. You waste it.

Our time is limited, so we need to limit how we spend our time.

Fast Forward

Now, there are all kinds of ways to apply this principle.

- If you're a student, you can apply this to your life a school.
- If you're in a career, you can apply this to your job.

But since Moses already has us contemplating the scope of everlasting to everlasting, let's keep focusing on the bigger picture,

And to do that, we're going to fast-forward time. We're going to fast-forward to the end of your life and mine. And instantaneously, immediately, we're going to gain some wisdom.

And if you'll take this wisdom (that, in most cases, people don't get till the end of their life) and bring it back to your current stage of life, you will make better decisions concerning what you put into your time or into your schedule—which is the same as putting it into your life.

For many years, Bronnie Ware worked as a hospice nurse; spending time with people who have about twelve weeks to live, staying with them all the way to the end.

As many of her patients approached their final days, she would ask if they had regrets or things they would do differently. She was so surprised by the phenomenal clarity of vision people gained at the end of their lives that she began documenting their responses,ⁱⁱⁱ a process which not only changed her life^{iv} but eventually became a book, *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*.^v

So, today, just to help you fast-forward and get a perspective that you won't have any other way, I want to share with you the top two regrets that people have within the last twelve weeks—or, actually, in most cases, in the last few days . . . and in some cases, the last few hours—of their life.

These are men and women who are

numbering their days because they cannot avoid any longer that their days are numbered. Here is the wisdom that suddenly they're confronted with.

I'm going to give you the second one first. In Bronnie Ware's conversations, she discovered that the ...

#2 Regret: "I wish I hadn't worked so hard."

Here's what she wrote about it:

"This came from every male patient that I nursed—every single man. Every single man, at the end, said, 'I wish I had not worked so hard.' They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship.

"Women also spoke of this regret

but, as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. But all of the men, all of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence.”

You know what this means?

It means if we don’t learn to number our days, we will misspend our time—our life—and we will have an avoidable regret.

Because, when you think you have all the time in the world with your kids, and all the time in the world with your spouse, and all the time in the world, and all the time in the world . . . and

then you suddenly realize you *don't* have all the time in the world ... *you can't go back.*

- You only get to be twenty once.
- You only get to be thirty once.
- You only get to be forty ... a couple times.
- You get to be fifty indefinitely.

These are stages of life you can't do over and you can't undo.

Now before I show the number-one regret to you, if you're a teenager, college student, or a young person just starting out in a career, you need to tune in. If you tuned out, tune back in because this is huge. This is a game-

changer.

The most common regret that dying people had ...

#1 Regret: “I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.”

I wish I had had the courage to live true to myself and not the life that other people – the culture – expected of me.

Again, Ware writes:

“When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled.

“Most people had not honored even half of their dreams and had to die

knowing that it was due to the choices they had made or not made.”

“It’s remarkable how small things that don’t actually matter can dominate our days.”^{vi}

“Yeah But”

Now, I’ve just done you a favor. I just fast-forwarded you to the end. You now have some of the wisdom that comes with living as if your days are numbered.

But what do you do with it?

- How does it apply to your current schedule?

- What does it imply about your current pace?
- What does it mean when you realize there is very little space—there is very little space between your current pace and your limits – and you don’t want to end up at the end of your life with those regrets?

It means exactly what we’ve been talking about. It means you need to start limiting how you spend your time.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking because I’m no different from you. I have the same thoughts.

You’re thinking, “yeah but.”

You’re thinking, “yeah, this all makes

logical sense and (if you're a Christian) spiritual sense but, in reality ..."

"If I don't do as much as I possibly can, I'll never make it."

What's "it"?

"I don't know, but I won't make it."

Do you know what the people that Bronnie Ware spent time with would say about that?

They'd say you better make sure you've chosen the right "it" because you can spend your whole life trying to make "it" and get to the end and realize "it" was the wrong "it."

*Teach us to number our
days that we may gain a*

heart of wisdom.

Or maybe you're thinking, "yeah, but ..."

"If I don't do as much as I possibly can, I'll fall behind."

"I don't want my kids to fall behind. I don't want us to fall behind. I don't want to fall behind."

Fall behind who? Fall behind what?

You should have an answer to that question if that's going to drive your schedule.

*Teach us to number our
days that we may gain a
heart of wisdom.*

Some of you are thinking, "yeah, but ..."

“If I don’t do as much as I possibly can, I’ll be poor.”

But what is “poor?” Have you ever stopped to define it?

A lot of people who are worried about this; a lot of people who think “if I don’t, if I don’t, if I don’t, I’ll be poor” have never really thought it through. They’ve never really considered what “poor” really looks like.

Instead, it’s just an emotion – a fear – that drives them. And that’s not a very good reason to be driven.

*Teach us to number our
days that we might gain a
heart of wisdom.*

One more ...

“Yeah, but if I don’t do as much as I possibly can, I won’t be accepted.”

By who?

And this is an issue all through our lives but, for high school students and college students, it’s particularly acute.

So listen up. Listen up to the “old guy” because I’ve lived long enough to know that I’m right about this one. I told my kids this when they were your age and *they will tell you* I was right.

All the people that you think are so important right now ... all the people you believe you must be accepted by or your life is over ...

- You’re not even going to *know* them

in ten years.

- You're probably not going to know them in *five* years.
- If you're a high school student, in *three* years, you're not going to be anywhere near them.

These people who right now are driving how you spend your time, how you *waste* your time, how you waste *your life* ... you're not even going to know them, and they will have robbed you of what's most important:

- The life you could have lived
- The life you should have lived
- The live you were meant to live
- The life God called you to live

You'll have missed out it on it because *they* will have determined *for you* what

needs to be in, what needs to be out, and what priority it needs to be given.

You'll have lived the life of a slave instead of the life of a free man or woman.

Questions

Now we're going to get really personal and really practical and this will be the end of the message.

When we number our days and we embrace the wisdom that comes with that, that's when we'll find breathing room in our schedules.

So, here's what I want you to do this week. I want you to think through four questions concerning your schedule.

You can write these down now or you can look on our Facebook page this afternoon and we'll have them posted up.

Bearing in mind that “because my time is limited I need to limit what I do with my time” ...

- What do I need to add to my schedule?

What am I not doing *at all* right now that I need to start doing?

- What do I need to subtract from it (as in “remove completely”)?

Let me talk about this one for just a second—and this might be hard.

For some of you, the answer to that question is a “who” not a “what.” There’s a person (or persons) in your life and they’re stealing your life from you and you know it.

They’re not bad people and you may even love them. But, you know in your heart that they have forced so many things into your life and into your time and into your schedule.

So, when you think about numbering your days and living as if your days are numbered, maybe, for this season they’ve got to go.

Those are the first two questions. What do I need to add? What do I need to subtract?

Then, the last two questions ...

Bearing in mind that “because my time is limited I need to limit what I do with my time” ...

- What do I need more of?

What needs a bigger chunk of my schedule than I currently give it?

- What do I need less of?

You can't get rid of it altogether but you're spending too much time on it. This maybe even be a couple or a family thing. “We're just spending too much time on that.”

- We don't need to throw away the TV, but we need to spend less time in front of it.

- I don't need to get rid of all my extra-income jobs but, one of them needs to go.
- I don't need to quit playing games on my Xbox or Playstation or my phone, but I need to turn that down a little bit.

For some of you, if you just turned some things down and some things up, it would totally change your life because your time is your life.

Now, as you think about all of that – as you think about those questions in light of the fact that your days are numbered – I would also suggest that you consider how much attention you give to the spiritual dimension of your life:

- The time that you spend here in worship and learning
- The time that you spend alone with God
- The time that you spend reading the scripture or listening to worship music

Because remember how Moses started out the whole thing?

Remember what allowed him to see the true reality of his limited time?

It was looking at God and seeing his own life in the context everlasting to everlasting. It was understanding that if he could see God as He truly is – in all His power and might – that would help him make wise decisions about his time,

because he would see the reverence God is due.

So, I want to encourage you to do that as well; to consider how much attention you give to the spiritual dimension of your life.

Let's pray together.

Lord, before the mountains were born; before you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

And we are like the new grass of the morning which springs up quickly. We're here today and gone tomorrow.

Help us, Lord, to see you as you

truly are. And teach us to number our days, so that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Amen.

Feature – More of You

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Watching online today because of the weather ... not able to participate in offering: you can do so through the serve/give tab on the app or website. We appreciate you doing that as January is one of our lower giving months and snow days make it even tighter financially.
2. Speaking of finances, next week ... breathing room in our finances.

3. Stand for a blessing.

May you be rooted and
established in love.

May you have power, together
with all the Lord's chosen
people,

To grasp how wide and long
and high and deep is the love of
Christ

And may you be filled to the
measure of all the fullness of
God.

Endnotes

ⁱ Note that this message is based on Andy Stanley's message Time from his series "Breathing Room."

ⁱⁱ Referring to Keith Urban's Days Go By.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://storylineblog.com/2012/12/19/the-top-5-regrets-of-the-dying/>

^{iv} <https://bronnieware.com/blog/regrets-of-the-dying/>

^v <https://bronnieware.com/regrets-of-the-dying/>

^{vi} Justin Zoradi