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## Catch Your Breath! How to Find Fresh Life in 20 Minutes a Day

Tuesday, January 19, 2011 | Written by Lenya Heitzig

"Let me catch my breath before you take it away again," a blogger begged the cyber-world. We live in a multi-tasking, microwaveable, life at internet-speed world. Recently, I saw a young mother frantically pushing a stroller, munching on a breakfast bar, while talking on her cell. She had crowded eating breakfast, exercising, closing a business transaction, while spending "quality time" with her toddler into a twenty-minute unit of time.

More than likely she had adopted the attitude I'd picked up earlier in life. She probably felt guilty for not getting everything done in a day. My need to please had trapped me in the game of great expectations. As I transitioned from single student to full-time pastor's wife and mother I fell prey to the *You Should* syndrome: "You should home-school." "You should attend every church function!" "You should recycle!" "You should decorate like Martha Stewart!" Finally, a voice of sanity broke through the clamor, "Don't let others 'should you' to death."

My friend Penny never tried to tell me what I *should* do. She gave me permission *not* to do some things. One week, guests had drained every spare moment from my schedule. But I still felt obligated to prepare a home cooked meal and attend a women's meeting. I called to vent and she said, "Lenya, just order take-out and stay home." Flabbergasted I asked, "I have permission to play hooky???" Penny replied, "You need a break. Everyone will understand." That evening I caught my breath. Alone at home the Lord spoke to me, "Not only are you out of breath physically; you've lost your spiritual wind." I was too busy for God. Can you relate? I would like to give you permission to catch your breath, too. Take a few minutes to reexamine your priorities.

## Spiritual Air

What oxygen is to the human body the Holy Spirit is to our soul. The Greek word for "spirit" *pneuma* means "breath" or "wind." It depicts breath panted out, like performing CPR. Jesus used wind

metaphorically to help Nicodemus understand the Spirit's mysterious role in breathing new life into believers' souls: *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit"* (John 3:8 nkjv). When the disciples met in the Upper Room after Christ's resurrection and ascension we're told, *"Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind... it filled the whole house where they were sitting...they were filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:2-4 nkjv).

Like Nicodemus, when we inhale the Spirit's breath, we're born again. And like the disciples, we can catch the mighty wind of the Spirit, receiving new power for Christian living.

## Wind Catchers

Don't *you* want to become a spiritual wind-catcher? Prayer and following God's plan can bring new purpose to your life.

- Kites glide to the heights through great gusts of wind. God will lift you above the world's worries when you pray in the Spirit. *"Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit"* (Jude 20 niv).
- Windmills capture the breeze in their blades to pump water or create energy. Just as windmills work with the wind to accomplish their purpose, walking in the Spirit helps you fulfill the plan God has for you. *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:25 nkjv).
- Sailboats glide on the water to reach new destinations by enfolding the wind in their sails. When you embrace the Lord in worship He'll bring purpose to your life. *"Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24 nkjv).

## Shortness of Breath

Perhaps like David, you've cried out, *"So pants my soul for You, O God"* (Psalm 42:1 nkjv). I've discovered three things that congest a Christian's soul:

### 1. Suffocated by sin:

Sin is as toxic as pollution. Overexposure to pollution causes headache, shortness of breath, and feeling water-logged. Spiritual pollutants can create a "scorched soul" scenario. James decried that sexual immorality and idol worship will "pollute" the soul (see Acts 15:20). Jude warned that we can be "defiled" by the flesh (see Jude 23). Paul said that foul language is "corrupt" or corrosive (see Eph. 4:29). It's been said, "Pollution of the heart is man's greatest ecological problem." We're all for going green. But "going God" is so much better. Don't allow yourself to be suffocated by the world's sinful pollutants.

## 2. Strangled by stuff:

Haven't you found that stuff stifles? The more we have, the more we worry. The root word for worry means "to strangle." Worry lays a choke hold on our emotions. Doctors warn that anxiety has physical repercussions including racing heart, sweating, indigestion, and ulcers. Jesus warned that "*the deceitfulness of riches choke the word*" (Matt. 13:22). A missionary woman who gave up her creature comforts in the US for an uncomplicated existence in the Philippines said, "Simple life, simple problems." She found that her new low-key lifestyle gave her plenty of spiritual breathing room. Maybe it's time to simplify.

## 3. Smothered by schedules:

A wise man said, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." Too many of us feel smothered by our schedules, letting the natural world crowd out spiritual wonders. Being smothered leaves a person disoriented, detached, and desensitized. Make a mental list of your weekly demands: Household, Financial, Family, Church, Work, Hobbies, etc. Now decide which are urgent and which are important. Urgent things include the ringing phone, piles of laundry, or the next episode on TV. Urgent things demand our attention NOW! Important things like reading the Bible, praying with our children, or visiting a sick friend patiently wait for time that often never comes. Charles E. Hummel said, "The winds of other people's demands have driven us onto a reef of frustration. We confess, quite apart from our sins, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.'" [\[1\]](#) Isn't it time to reschedule?

# Units of Time

Start to think of time in units. You could divide your day into 20-minute units. There are three of these units in every hour. Make the bed and get dressed-2 units. Fix and feed the kids breakfast - 1 unit. Lunch with clients-3 units. In a twenty-four hour day you have seventy-two units at your disposal. In one 20-minute unit you could...

- Walk one mile.
- Prepare a grilled cheese sandwich and a cup of soup.
- Vacuum the average 2,000 sq. ft. home.
- Read the international 20-minute newspaper.
- Shampoo and blow-dry your hair.
- Make the average commute to work.
- Complete a personal Bible study.

# Catch Your Breath

Can you give God one unit of time? When you do, you'll catch your spiritual breath. Let me show you how to study the Bible in just 20 minutes a day. Let's begin with a familiar Scripture:

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16-17).*

### **1. Lift up...2 minutes**

Simply lift up a prayer to God. Rephrase the passage into a personal prayer. You might pray: *God, thank You for loving me and sending your Son. Please show me how eternal life can begin now. Amen.*

### **2. Look at...8 minutes**

Examine the passage to find out the facts by asking, *Who, What, When, Where, Why* questions. You might ask:

*Who are the main characters? (God, the world, the Son, whoever believes.)*

*What did they do? (God presented the world His precious Son as a gift.)*

*When, where, or why did they do it? (In love God offers fresh life to those who believe.)*

### **3. Learn about...5 minutes**

Now take a few minutes to learn, "What does it mean?" Look up cross-references. For instance, Romans 5:8 tells us that Christ died "while we were still sinners." This gives more insight into *why* Christ willingly gave His life. Try looking up words from the passage to gain understanding.

### **4. Live out...5 minutes**

The most important part of any Bible study is to discover, 'How will I live out what God has taught me?' Spend time asking, "How can I put this into practice?" John 3:16 might prompt questions like: *Do I believe in God's only Son? What will I sacrifice for the world? How will I show God's love?*

20 minutes a simple unit of time. It's a great place to start. As you study God's Word, you'll find yourself living the life God intended, not frantically playing catch-up. You'll live a life of peace and purpose. As you develop spiritual stamina, you'll find yourself wanting to give God more units of time. What a breathtaking idea!

## **FRESH LIFE**

Use the acronym FRESH to begin a life-changing Bible study:

**FORMULATE.** FORMULATE your plan by choosing what you will study and when for 20 minutes a day. Keep your study tools (Bible, journal, pen, devotional, or commentary) in a convenient place. Perhaps a portable book bag.

**REALISTIC.** Be REALISTIC with your expectations. Perhaps studying systematic theology as a new believer is too ambitious. Or illness could make you miss a day. That's okay! Just pick up where you left off and continue.

**EVALUATE.** EVALUATE your progress regularly. If getting up early isn't working try adjusting your study time during lunch or before bed. Are you gaining head knowledge or are you making heart-felt changes?

**SUCCESS.** "Wisdom brings SUCCESS," wrote Solomon (Eccl. 10:10 nkjv). Has God answered prayers? Are you being transformed? The more you know and grow, the more you'll want to know and grow.

**HEADWAY.** As you make HEADWAY in your spiritual journey, you'll find yourself wanting to spend more time immersed in God's Word. Your study time will become second naturelike breathing fresh air.

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[1] Charles E. Hummel, *Tyranny of the Urgent: Is there really enough time to do all that God requires of you?*, navpress.com, Issue #60 November/December 1990, accessed 5/15/08