



Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

You'll Never Walk Alone

UKirk Lenten Resource - Lent 6

By Rev. Maggie Alsup

**”BREATHE IT ALL IN,
LOVE IT ALL OUT.” ~
MARY OLIVER**



Theme - Contrite (from Psalm 51:11-12)

Overview: This week we will look to BREATH. Life begins with God breathing into the first mud-creature, creating humankind. God breathes life into our communities through the work of the Spirit. Christ breathed his last breath from the cross, asking God to forgive us and our actions. This week we will look at God's breath in Ezekiel 37 and how this breath can impact our spiritual journey.

Scripture - Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Background

The valley of dry bones is one of the most known visions of Ezekiel. It has a vividness, a great narrative that drives the vision, and is full of symbolism. The story becomes richer when you learn about the historical context and background. For more information on the history of this text check out these resources from The Bible Project:

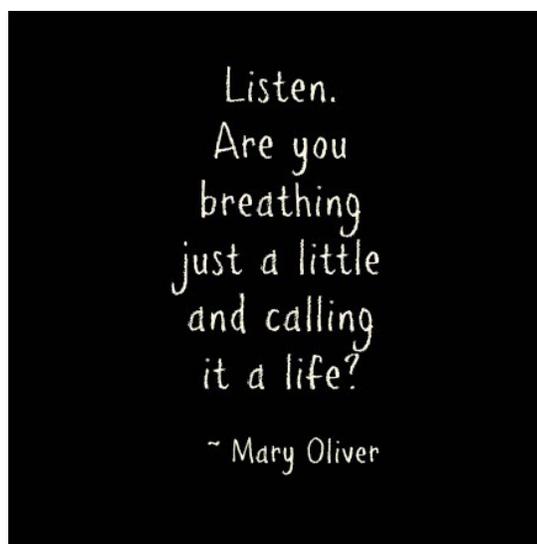
- <https://bibleproject.com/blog/ezechiels-gospel/>
- <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ezekiel-34-48/>
- <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/holy-spirit-part-2/>

Explore

Mary Oliver has spoken about breath numerous times in her poetry. Here are some excerpts:

- "Breathe it all in, love it all out."
- "Sunrise. What is the name of the deep breath I would take over and over for all of us? Call it whatever you want, it is happiness, it is another one of the ways to enter."
- "I held my breath as we do sometimes to stop time when something wonderful has touched us."
- "Listen. Are you breathing just a little, and calling it life?"

Which quote resonates with you? What connection is there to God's *ruach*?



Discuss

❖ Individual Questions:

1. When do you feel like dry bones? What do you do when you feel this way?
2. Where do you see God's breath in your life? Where is God breathing energy and life into you?

❖ Community Questions:

1. In what ways is our society a valley of dry bones?
2. How can someone prophesy to bring life to the dry bones? What does this look like in your context?
3. How can you be a modern-day Ezekiel in the valley?

Reflect

Breathing is second nature to humans. Most of the time we do not realize when we draw in a breath or breathe out. In Ezekiel 37 we hear of God breathing into dry bones, bringing life and energy. This breath is something beyond our basic inhalation or exhalation of air into our lungs. This is God's *ruach*, God's own wind, God's own spirit. God is pouring God's own spirit into something dry and dead, bringing about life, bringing energy, bringing hope of salvation. When we find ourselves dry, exhausted, in need of hope may we cry out to God, asking God's *ruach* to make us new and bring us hope and salvation.

Engage

BREATHING PRAYER

The spiritual discipline of a breathing prayer is something that links our spiritual life with that of science of breathing, giving us time to slow down our breathing and be present in the moment. There is great reward that can be found in breathing prayers. For more information of the history of the practice and biblical connections, please check out this [article](#).

You can use any phrase from scripture or a phrase that is meaningful for your group. Here are some common phrases for use:

- Be still and know that I am God.
- Breathe on me, breath of God.
- Make me a channel of your peace.
- I believe; help my unbelief.

To get started, ground yourself. Maybe that means planting both feet on the ground as you sit in a chair. Maybe that means laying down on the floor. Maybe it means sinking into a comfortable couch or chair. Whatever you need to do, ground yourself. Next select the phrase you will use in your prayer. Close your eyes and repeat the phrase you've selected. Pace your breathing with the phrase, breathing in say the first part of the phrase, breathing out say the second part of the phrase. For example, breath in with, "breathe on me," and breathe out with "breath of God." Continue to pray your prayer for a set period of time or until you feel you have reached a sense of inner stillness.

Going Forth

LISTEN

This week listen to [Breathe on Me, Breath of God](#). As you listen, reflect on the places where you need God's *ruach* to enter your life.

PRAY

Put into practice the breathing prayer discipline. Use a scripture passage your find comfort in or the one used in the ACTIVITY section (above) to guide you. How does this prayer discipline impact your journey? Do you notice a difference in your breathing patterns or rhythms as you practice this discipline?

REFLECT

Reflect on your breathing patterns. How does your breathing change when you are anxious? What does breathing feel like when you are working out? What does breathing look like when you find yourself laughing? Reflect on how your body breathes. Note when you need to slow down to breathe or how it feels to breathe with you are relaxed.

Liturgical Resources

Here's a [communion service](#) inspired by Ezekiel 37: 1-14 (and John 4, John 9, John 11). It was written by Eliza Buchakjian-Tweedy.

Invitation to the Table

Jesus calls us to the well,
inviting us to drink of the Living Water, and the life eternal.

**Jesus calls us out of the shadows, out of the graves,
to be entirely known, and entirely filled with God's presence.**

Jesus calls us all:

all who were made in God's own image,
all who breathe the breath of God's spirit:

the Spirit of Life.

**Jesus calls us to the table,
to the meal that nourishes our bodies
and binds our dry bones into one Body, living in Christ.**

Jesus calls us, here and now.

Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ.

Come, not because you must, but because you may.

Communion Prayer/Lord's Prayer

Holy God, source of all being,
you are greater by far than our human thoughts can comprehend.
With all that you have created, you abide;
weeping with us in grief and pain, rejoicing with us in life and love.
You are everywhere in this very moment;
holding the entirety of living experience
and weaving us together in the great and intricate tapestry of Creation.

**Creator God, mother and father of us all,
in your holy love you took on our limitations.**

**Born of a body, bound within a body,
you know the whole of this human experience.**

**Learning to communicate with words;
teaching us to communicate with presence.**

**Learning the fears that wring us dry;
teaching us of the love that nurtures us back to life.**

Everlasting God, you are everywhere and right here.

As close as the air we breathe,

the air which binds us one to another and all to your beautiful creation.

You are as close as the sunlight on our skin,

as close as the rain that drips from our hair;

the wind and the water that push us and lead us

and call us again and again into relationship with one another and with you.

Holy Spirit, divine Advocate, guide and encourage us.

Stir within our hearts,

that we may speak anew the familiar words that Jesus taught us...

Prayer of Thanksgiving

**Source of life, and breath, and being,
breathe into the dry dust of our existence.**

**Nourished in body by bread and juice,
may we strive for the nourishment of all bodies:**

may we work to end hunger in this creation that provides amply for all.

**Nourished in spirit by the Body which is within our own,
may we strive for the incorporation of all:**

**may we work to break the barriers
that divide us from one another and from you.
In the love that sustains us, and the Spirit that animates us,
may we give all thanks and praise to you, O God of all. Amen.**

~ written by Eliza Buchakjian-Tweedy, Pastor at First Church Congregational, Rochester, NH. She blogs at <http://sermonizing.wordpress.com/>

Prayers of the People

Gracious God,
God of all compassion and consolation,
your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls.
Pour out your Spirit upon us,
that we may face despair and death with the hope of resurrection
and faith through Christ, our Lord.
Help us to dance with the spirit,
the breath of life, which calls us out of the valley of dry bones
and into the Kingdom of God,
both a present reality and the grounding of our future hope.

Holy Father,
Father of Christ who revealed the way of life,
inscribe your law on our hearts that in this life,
we may be the body of Christ.
Help our hands to hold the sick and suffering.
Help our feet to walk with the poor.
Help our ears to listen to those who live in despair.
May our eyes be affixed upon the suffering of the cross
and the hope of the empty tomb
so that we may live as resurrection people.

Sovereign Lord,
Father of all in the power of the Spirit,
you know our faults and yet you promise to forgive.
Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom.
Open our hearts to gladness,
call dry bones to dance,
and restore to us the joy of your salvation.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever, as we continue to pray saying,
Our Father, who art in heaven....

~ originally posted on the **I'm Just Saying**, and found on [re:Worship](#)

