

**Breathe In**  
Matthew 5: 1-2

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About a year ago, with the help and expertise of Jeanne Collins, the church leadership - the Session and Deacons - designed a simple survey which asked you to tell us what you valued about Bedford Presbyterian Church. As we reviewed what you told us, two words rose to the top of the list. **Community** and **Faith**. In a couple of weeks we are planning an opportunity for you to share with us and with each other more of what those two words mean to you. In the meantime, as we discussed the survey results, Jeanne Collins suggested an image which resonated with those of us gathered around the table.

Breathe In.

Breathe Out.

Breathe in are those parts of our life together which nurture and deepen our faith and challenge us to grow in our understanding of what it means to follow in the way and in the spirit of Jesus.

Breathe in.

Worship.

Music.

Prayers.

Sunday Spirit.

Youth groups.

Spirituality groups.

Parenting groups.

Community dinners.

Book discussions.

Bible study.

Even the articles and reflections we post on our blogs and on our social media platforms.

You get the idea.

Breathe in.

All those things which help you pause for a moment and to reflect and to remember who you are and whose you are and who you are called to be.

Breathe out is the other side of the equation.

It is all those ways we live out our faith amidst the need and wonder and complexity of the world as it is.

Food Pantry.

Community Center.

Emergency Shelter Partnership.

Rewarding Potential Scholarship.

Neighbors Link.

Hurricane relief.

Work trips.

And, also, how you take your faith and the the values of your faith out the door of this place and into the marketplace of ideas.

Into the office. Into the meeting. Into school. Watching and responding to the news.

Breathe out.

Like with our own breath, these two actions go together.

If we just focus on the *breathe in* side, we begin to look like a football huddle with all of facing each other with our backs to the world. If we just pay attention to breathe out, we risk burnout because there is not the regular reminder and renewal and support we need to sustain the work we are doing.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

You may have noticed the TVs which we have on either side of the sanctuary.

Some of you have shared with us that you find them a distraction.

Others have shared with us that you like seeing the images we have displayed.

Like with anything new, we are learning to use them in ways which are effective and meaningful.

Again, as we took the information you provided in the survey last year and have begun to translate that into what we do, one step was to use the TVs and the images and pictures we have to provide that reminder for all of us of who we are and who we are called to be. To remind us to breathe in and to breathe out.

The small group working on this idea designated September and October as a time to focus on the Breathe In side of the equation which is what I found myself thinking about this week.

What does *Breathe In* look like for you?

How do you do it?

How do you renew your faith?

Deepen your faith?

Hold onto hope?

Not just on Sundays. I am not sure that is enough.

How about on Monday and Tuesday?

Or, how about when you walk into work on Wednesday?

Or, as you get your kids ready for school on Thursday.

Breathe in.

I didn't forget the Bible reading for this morning.

After a long genealogy and then the story about the wisemen and then the story of Joseph and Mary and Jesus fleeing to Egypt. And, then baptism and temptation in the wilderness and being

run out of town when he returned to Nazareth, in the fifth chapter the author of the gospel finally gets to this:

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:*

And, so begins a portion of Matthew's gospel which contains teachings and stories that are among the most familiar in the gospels.

The Beatitudes. Blessed are the peacemakers, the poor and poor in spirit, the meek.

You are the light of the world.

The Lord's Prayer.

Do unto others.

Love and pray for your enemies.

Build your house on the rock.

I selected this passage from the Bible for this morning because I wonder how we make space... How you make space in your life for Jesus to speak to you. How and where do you stop long enough to listen for what he is saying or where God might be nudging against the edges of your lives with that still, small voice? How do you breathe in enough to maintain your balance and make it through the day?

There is no one way.

No set formula.

And, I don't have anything new or different to add only the reminder that you need to breathe.

Breathe in.

Tape a reminder to your bathroom mirror.

Breathe in.

Read a book which engages both your heart and your mind.

*The Heart of Christianity* by Marcus Borg or *Help. Thanks. Wow.* by Anne Lamott.

Breathe in.

Setting aside a few minutes each day to meditate and to pray.

When you sit down at your desk or make your children's lunches for school.

Breathe in.

Say grace/a prayer before you eat dinner together.

Breathe in.

Pay attention to what we post on Facebook and Twitter.

None of this is rocket science.

But it does require commitment and attention and a seriousness about your faith.

And, does require setting aside a certain amount of time in the busyness and craziness of your lives to listen for that still, small voice which would speak to you still.

Breathe in.