

Daily Devotional, July 29, 2020 Breath of Life

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.” Ezekiel 37:5-6 (NIV)

“The spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Job 33:4 (NIV)

I recently saw an article titled, “The Dependability of Change.” My mind kept rehashing those four words as I pondered my response to them. The thought of change as something I could count on, like summer fading into fall followed by the abrupt chill of winter was a bit out of left field. But the more I mulled over this turn of phrase, I have come to decide change is, indeed, dependable.

Since first hearing the words Coronavirus and Covid-19, I have experienced every emotion known. Sometimes, I feel discouraged and anxious, and yet other moments, hopeful and inspired when I see the heroes in action, those in the medical profession, EMT's, and yes, law enforcement. Some days, I feel extraordinarily tired, yet other days, fairly energetic. Fortunate or not, the one thing I *can* depend on is change. If we fight change to the point of becoming tense and anxious, a state of persistent stress will likely become our neighbor.

Chronic stress keeps our bodies in a constant state of fight or flight, which leads to a variety of health challenges including depression, digestive problems, heart disease, weight gain, sleep issues and the list goes on. Prolonged exposure to stress hormones such as cortisol, which are produced when the body is experiencing stress, has the ability to compromise our immune systems.

While we cannot control the stressful situations life brings our way, or prevent change from taking place, we can control our response. One way that I have found to bring relief over stress is the practice of deep breathing. I find this to be a dependable way to escape the fight or flight syndrome, and to move into the healing mode of rest/relax, which engages our parasympathetic nervous system. The Mayo Clinic reports deep breathing can decrease the effect of stress on your mind and body. It also can slow your heartbeat and lower or steady blood pressure.

Applying deep breathing in order to support your health is not at all difficult. I encourage you to practice it now by paying close attention to your breath. Without breathing any differently from how you normally do, simply notice the pace and depth of your breath—is it deep, shallow, quick, long, whatever it may be, just concentrate on it for a few moments.

Now, begin with one deep inhale and one complete exhale. Repeat this several times. It is that simple. The challenge is to bring our hectic mind back to focusing on our breathing whenever stressful moments evolve.

I may not always revel in the thought of depending on change, but I am certain of God's faithfulness. In those moments when change feels overwhelming, I pray you will take a moment to slow down and breathe deeply knowing that God is not only along for the ride, but that God is also in control of every breath we take. It is the breath of life!

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” Psalm 150:6

Prayer: My God, I am breathing every moment, drawing all my life from You; Breath by breath I live for You, Lord, Your Spirit lives and breathes in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.