

breathe series

Created

facilitator's guide

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Welcome

We are excited that you and your women's group have chosen to watch and reflect on *Breathe: Created*. We believe that as you journey through this series together, you will each experience the sacredness of Scripture and gain a better understanding of the big story the Bible tells us.

Whether your group consists of women new to studying the Bible, women who have studied the scriptures for years, or a mixture of the two, *Breathe: Created* is designed to meet each of you at your level and then lead you deeper into the story of God. As you read, listen, reflect, and discuss each week, you will begin to uncover how God's story is still being written today in our world and in our lives.

Below you will find some helpful ideas and instructions to get you started.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Whether the group going through the study has met together for years or is newly formed, we recommend setting aside a time for the group to gather and go over the goals and expectations. In order for this study to be most beneficial group members must:

- Read the Bible passage and complete the participant's guide chapter for the week
- Do their best to attend each group meeting
- Be willing to engage in conversation and discussion about what they have watched
- Come with the expectation that God is present and active in the world today and that God's Spirit desires to reveal what God is accomplishing in their lives

(Note: This facilitator's guide covers all eight weeks of the series, but the accompanying participant's guide begins after the introductory week. So, you will instruct your group members to complete the chapter in their guide during the week before you all reconvene to watch the corresponding video together in your next group session.)

BEFORE EACH MEETING

This study is designed to cover one video each week. During your first meeting, encourage your group members to read the Bible passage and complete the corresponding chapter in the participant's guide that will be discussed at the next gathering time. This will help foster the best possible conversations within the group.

DURING EACH MEETING

Each group has its own unique dynamics, so pay attention to what strikes a chord with your group and be willing to adjust as needed. That said, we urge each group to incorporate four elements into their times together:

- Social. Set aside time for group members to share what is going on in their lives. The better people know each other and feel comfortable around each other, the easier it will be for everyone to discuss the material being studied.
- Curriculum. Watch the video lesson.
- Dialogue. Discuss the questions about the material.
- Prayer. Each video ends with a corporate prayer, but also be sure to allow time for group members to share their praises or prayer requests.

AFTER EACH MEETING

After each lesson, group members are encouraged to do the following:

- Read the Bible passage and complete the corresponding participant's guide chapter for next week's lesson.
- Pray for the prayer requests and offer thanks for the praises mentioned.

How to Use this Facilitator's Guide

This group study has eight different sessions that correspond to the seven videos in the *Breathe: Created* Bible study. These sessions are designed to help facilitate meaningful discussion about the content of each video. (The first session is an introduction session and doesn't have a video.)

MAIN POINT

This simply summarizes the content of the video in one or two sentences. Whenever possible, the group facilitator (and group members) should complete the entire corresponding chapter in the participant's guide before that session.

OTHER KEY THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

This section lists other thoughts and ideas that help inform and build on the main emphasis for the video. This section can help function as a reference while teaching the lesson. Feel free to add your own additional notes of things you would like to discuss as you preview the video.

RELATED PASSAGES

The passages listed are those that are covered in the video. The facilitator may wish to reference these passages (and other supportive passages she considers helpful) during the lesson.

WORD DEFINITIONS

The words listed are those that are specifically defined in the video. The facilitator may need to refer to these definitions during the discussion.



OPENING

This section provides suggestions of how you can begin your group session from week to week. We recommend opening with prayer. Along with that, we propose one or two questions the group facilitator can ask to begin conversation.

VIDEO

This section states which video will be watched during each group session.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

This section includes two types of questions to help you facilitate discussion about the video you're watching together. "Pause" questions refer to the specific questions Shawna asks you to pause the video to discuss. Some videos have just one place to pause; others have multiple places. "Further Discussion" questions help you go deeper into the topic and can be incorporated throughout the video watching or at the end of your time together.

CLOSING

This section offers a suggestion of how you can close your group session from week to week.

Introductory Session

MAIN POINT

Creation is not just the beginning of God's story; it is the common thread throughout God's story. And what is God's method of creating? Breath. God breathes and creation is born. Inherent in our own breath is a constant reminder of our Creator God, alive and active still, who not only wants to create in us, but also through us.

OTHER KEY THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

Share this section with your group during the opening.

- Breath is essential for life. Creation began when God breathed his Spirit into the mess of nothingness, darkness, and chaos.
- Scripture contains echoes of stories that ring throughout the whole Bible. We are embarking on an eight-week journey uncovering the theme of creation that is woven throughout Scripture, from Genesis through Revelation. When God breathed into Adam and Eve, that was only the beginning of God's creative work in the life of humanity. The exciting truth is that God is still creating and re-creating today.
- The first humans, Adam and Eve, came to life only after God breathed into them, filling them with the Spirit of life. God breathes the same life into us.
- This series is called Breathe because approaching the Living Word of God invites us to breathe deeply of God's life-giving Spirit. We are breathing in God's Spirit and being re-made by the Living Word of God who is Jesus Christ.
- While there are multiple ways to study the Bible, we will use biblical theology, which considers the scriptures as open conversations that thread throughout the entire Bible. Biblical theology does its best to place scripture *in conversation* with scripture, and then in-



vite our contemporary situations to sit in on the chat. So it follows that Genesis helps us interpret Revelation, and Isaiah helps us interpret Mark; even Colossians helps us interpret John's gospel.

- The way we interpret Scripture influences how we view God and his work in the world.
- We will spend the first three weeks in Genesis as we uncover the beginning of God's creative work. But Genesis can't contain all of God's creative activity. Those first couple of chapters are a foretaste to an elaborate story of our Creator God, a story that is alive still today as you and I surrender to God's desire to make all things new.
- After Genesis we will look at Psalm 51 and David's prayer of new creation, asking for a new heart and spirit.
- From there Ezekiel 36 and 37 will give us chills, as we see once again God showing up in our darkest hour to breathe new life in the valley of dry bones.
- But it all comes together when Jesus, the eternal Word of God enters the picture. We will look at God's plan of salvation in Jesus as it is perfectly in sync with God's creation. And finally in the resurrection of Jesus, our Creator God unleashes creativity on the earth and begins again.
- When you gather together and open God's Word, this is a time for you to inhale, breathe in the goodness of God's Spirit and Truth. But if all we did was inhale, we'd be blue in the face! That's why you have a participant's guide. It gives you an opportunity to continue breathing the Spirit throughout the week, scriptures and ideas for you to reflect on, but also some ways you can exhale, and put the truth of these scriptures into practice.

For those of you who choose to use the participant's guide throughout the week, you'll want to get started before you meet again. Now, if you have done other Bible studies with participant's guides in the past, this one might not be what you are expecting! It's not homework—there are no quizzes and you will not be asked to turn in your work to the teacher. But there is plenty of room for you to reflect.



Each week in your participant's guide you will apply three questions to a new scripture passage. The scripture will change each week but the questions will not. Each week you will ask:

- What do you learn about the character of God?
- What do you learn about what God is up to in our world?
- How do you see this God at work in the world still today?

Remember: the questions we ask of Scripture point to who we believe God is. These questions assume first that God is the main character of Scripture, and Scripture is God's self-revelation, or God showing us who God is.

Second, these questions assume God is engaged in our world, not some distant deity looking down on us with amusement or condemnation, but intimately involved in the affairs of this world with a plan for its redemption.

Finally, these questions assume that God is steadfast and faithful, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. If we say that God is Creator, then God is still a Creator, still being creative, doing new things, breathing new life into darkness and chaos.

The God revealed to us in the stories of the Bible is still at work in our lives and world to make all things new.

When we approach the Living Word of God, the Spirit invites us to breathe deeply of God's life and be remade by God's sacred and creative breath. While the Bible may appear like a compilation of stories with an assortment of main characters, it actually tells one big story whose main character is God. Inside its pages, we discover stories of people whose lives are transformed into reflections of God's story and learn from them how our lives can similarly be shaped to echo God's story.

Breathing isn't a one-way street. We are called to not only inhale God's life-giving Spirit, but to exhale it back into the world as worship, taking part in God's mission.



RELATED PASSAGES:

As this is the introductory week, rather than explicitly discussing passages, we have provided you with an overview of which books of the Bible are included in the study, each representing a different type of biblical writing. They are as follows:

- Genesis (historical)
- Psalms (poetic)
- Ezekiel (prophetic)
- John (gospel)

WORD DEFINITIONS:

- *Bara* (Hebrew): To create, shape, form. In the Old Testament this verb is only ever used to describe God's action.
- *Ruach* (Hebrew): Wind, breath, mind, spirit
- *Tov* (Hebrew): Good, fit for a purpose. Goodness is not defined by the opinions of others but by the design of God.

OPENING:

As the facilitator, begin by introducing yourself and then share why you want to participate in this study and what you're looking forward to learning. Ask the other members to do likewise.

After everyone has shared, ask if someone will say a brief prayer for your time together (or do so yourself).

Next, explain how the study is designed. Each week, you'll gather together to watch the video (except this first week) and discuss the lesson as a group. Throughout the lesson there will be moments to pause, reflect, and discuss what you are taking in. Tell your group to be prepared to respond as if they're in a conversation. Then, to prep for the next week's lesson, each member will read the Bible passage and complete the corresponding participant's guide chapter on their own time in between the gatherings. (Note: Because today is the first lesson, there was no correlating prep work.)



Typically this is the time where you would show the video. However since this week's session does not have a video you will lead the teaching time. Share the information found in the "Other Key Thoughts and Ideas" section above. Then pause to reflect on the questions below as a group.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP:

- What types of Bible studies have you been a part of in the past? How might this be similar or different?
- Have you ever given much thought to understanding the Bible? Are there certain ways that you seek to understand scripture?
- How would our lives, our families, and our communities be transformed if we depended on the Spirit for every breath we drew?
- Part of understanding the Bible is asking yourself, "What is God saying to me in this passage?" Have you ever thought of yourself as being able to understand the Bible?
- Have you ever used the biblical theology approach to study the Bible? What do you think is gained by using this approach?
- Had you ever considered that God is the main character of the Bible? How does this make you read the Bible differently?

CLOSING:

Ask if anyone has any prayer requests or praises. After people have had a chance to share, close your gathering time in prayer.

Encourage your group members to pay attention to their breathing this week, letting it serve as a reminder of the creative breath of God. Challenge each member to set aside three minutes one day during the next week to sit alone in silence and just listen to her breathing.