

# People who Breathed - Overview

This module is focused on studying real people who put into practice the concept of **Breathe**: breathing with Jesus through spiritual disciplines and a humble attitude that create space for God to work in and through us.

Lesson 1 on **David** is a picture of someone who lived honestly and openly before God, sharing the good and the bad, knowing that nothing could come between them.

Lesson 2 highlights **Daniel** as an example of someone who faithfully prayed even as an exile who was being persecuted by his enemies. Your students will be encouraged to broaden their own prayer life.

Lesson 3 shows students the example of the **Early Church** as a community of believers who practiced their faith together. Hopefully this provide some interesting material for reflection how your group can experience similar closeness, co-operation and growth.

Lesson 4 examines **Peter**'s journey with Jesus as someone who literally walked with him. Even as a member of Jesus' inner circle, Peter's faith was sometimes confused. This lesson demonstrates that ups and downs in our walk with God are nothing to be afraid of.

The final lesson studies **Mary and Martha** and provides an opportunity to sum up what has been learned through the entire module. Students will see the importance of balance in breathing in and out in our walk with God, and they will be challenged to integrate the practices of this module into their lives in a sustainable way. After several lessons to explore different ways to "do" our relationship with God, this concluding lesson is an important reminder that serving God must flow from spending time with him, simply receiving his love and learning his ways.

# Breathe

## Module: PEOPLE WHO BREATHED

### Lesson 1: DAVID

#### Objectives:

- Students will learn that a strong relationship with God helps us do the right thing, even when that doesn't make sense to outsiders.
- Students will identify Psalm 54 as a reflection from David's experience as recorded in 1 Samuel 26.
- Students will connect their relationship with God to the challenges they face.

#### Materials Needed

- 3-5 (or more if you have a very large group) different images for visual synaptics (e.g. full page magazine ads, old wall calendar pages, or images from the internet). Note: If you enjoy using this type of activity with your group, it would be worth laminating the images for future use in another context.
- Paper and pens
- Index cards
- Chart paper and markers
- Large paper with the following questions already written out:
  - Do you see any hint of revenge in the psalm?
  - Do you think David wrote this psalm before or after he spared Saul's life? What clues do you have?
  - What does this psalm tell you about David's relationship with God?

## Minds On

**Prompt:** Have you ever been in a situation where somebody hated you for no good reason? Allow students to share what happened and how they felt.

Divide your students into groups of 3-6 (depending on overall group size), and give each group one of the images to look at. Have each person complete the following sentences within their group:

“Revenge is like this picture because \_\_\_\_\_”

“Revenge is not like this picture because \_\_\_\_\_”

When you gather everyone back together, each group can choose their favourite analogies and share with the bigger group.

**Prompt:** Over the next few weeks, we are going to be looking at different people from the Bible who had relationship with God, and tried to live them out each day. This week we are going to be looking at David and his interaction with a man named Saul. King Saul hated David because he knew God wanted him to be the next king of Israel and he was jealous that he could not have a dynasty. King Saul had disobeyed God and that is why he was losing the kingdom. Instead of facing the consequences, he tried to kill David! David was on the run from Saul, but God turned the tables and gave David an opportunity to kill Saul himself!

## Action

Provide students with a pen and paper. Ask students, as you slowly read 1 Samuel 26, to write down words or draw images of the emotions they are sensing. Afterwards, ask them the following questions and see if any of their words/images might give some indication.

- Why was King Saul coming after David? (Since this is not clear in the text, explain that Saul felt threatened by David because he knew God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel.)

- If the situations were reversed, do you think Saul would have spared David's life?
- Why did David spare Saul's life?
- How did Saul feel when he learned David spared his life?
- What do you think might have happened if David had killed Saul? Did David make the right decision?

Tell your students that David wrote a psalm (similar to a song or a poem) about this experience. First, ask students to suggest what they think David wrote. Record these answers on chart paper. Then have a volunteer (who you know can read well publicly) read Psalm 54.

**Think/Pair/Share:** Have your students think about what David wrote compared to what was earlier suggested. Then have them pair with a partner to share their thoughts. Post the large paper with questions as possible discussion starters. Students should be prepared to share their partner's answers.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Distribute paper and pens to your students and invite them to think of a difficult time in their life and write a psalm like David did. They can try to follow the same pattern as Psalm 54 or make up their own format. The important part is to communicate how their relationship with God is affected by the difficult situation - does their trust in God get stronger or weaker as they face problems?

Depending on your group, some students may wish to share their psalm, or they might prefer to keep their writing private. Use your judgment as you wrap up this activity.

**Prompt:** David's relationship with God gave him the strength to do the right thing and leave revenge in God's hands. To the people around him it looked like he was passing up

a God-given chance to get even, but David was willing to trust God even when his own life was at stake.

**Breathe In:** Have each student write Psalm 54:4 on an index card. Encourage them to put this card in their purse or wallet, or tape it to a mirror at home where they will be reminded of this promise.

**Breathe Out:** On the other side of the index card, have students write a name or situation that they need to trust God with and not intervene with their own actions. Encourage your students to memorize Psalm 54:4 so they can say it as a prayer when faced with these difficult situations.

Close in prayer thanking God for his help and protection in our daily lives and asking him to reveal himself in the difficult situations that students wrote on their index cards.

# Breathe

## Module: PEOPLE WHO BREATHED

### Lesson 2: DANIEL

#### Objectives:

- Students will understand how Daniel used specific habits to keep his relationship with God strong under pressure.
- Students will be equipped with a fresh perspective on prayer.

#### Materials Needed

- Bible
- Chart paper and marker
- Optional: magazines, scissors, tape/glue and Bristol board

## **Minds On**

Brainstorm habits that people have - good and bad - and write them or have a volunteer write them on the chart paper. Examples could include turning off lights when leaving a room, checking Facebook when you get home from school, chewing gum or biting your nails.

As an alternative, have students cut out pictures from magazines or flyers that represent habits and allow them to glue or tape them together on a display board.

**Prompt:** Does anyone know how long it takes to make or break a habit? (Allow for discussion) To be honest, it probably depends on the person and on the habit. Some sources say 21 days of consistent behaviour will create a habit, but if you don't keep it up, you can lose it just as fast. One of the biggest obstacles to keeping up a good habit is when things change. Summer vacation starting or stopping, moving to a new house, even joining a new team or club can change your schedule and interrupt habits you have developed, maybe without even thinking about it.

## **Action**

**Prompt:** Today we are going to look at someone from the Bible who had a habit of spending time with God every day. Daniel is famous because God rescued him from being eaten by lions in the lion den, but there is a lot more to the story. Daniel had been captured when his country was conquered by the Babylonians and he was trained to serve the king. Daniel was very wise and he was promoted to a very high position in the kingdom. However, even with all of these changing circumstances, Daniel never gave up his daily practice of praying three times a day. Let's read the story in Daniel 6:1-10.

Have a volunteer read the passage while other students follow along in their own Bibles if possible. It might be helpful to explain that satrap means governor, so it is clear that Daniel's position had a lot of prestige and responsibility! Ask the following questions:

- Why did the king's officials hate Daniel so much?
- What reason would King Darius have to make the law that people could only pray to him?
- Is there another way that Daniel's enemies could have trapped him?
- How did Daniel respond to the law?

**Think/Pair/Share:** Give students time to think about the following question for a minute or so, and then have them share their answer with a partner before discussing as a whole group. **Ask:** If you were in Daniel's position with so much success and responsibility, would you break the law just to pray? Why or why not?

On a fresh piece of chart paper, sketch a table with four categories: Where, When, How, What. Select 5 volunteers (one to read Daniel 6:10 and assign each of the remaining four with one of the categories). Have one volunteer read Daniel 6:10 and the other four will each write the answer on the chart: where, when, how, and what Daniel prayed (In his upper room; three times a day; on his knees; giving thanks); they can receive help from other students if needed. Then, allow students to brainstorm and add to the chart their own ideas of where, when, how and what they could pray. If you have more than 5 students, you can divide into groups of 3-4 so everyone can participate, and a "secretary" can take notes or add the group's ideas to the chart.

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Once the groups have all added their ideas, discuss some of the suggestions and give time for the students to reflect which ones they could incorporate into their life.



Ask students if they have any prayer habits, and if so what they are: when, where or how do they usually pray? If they don't have a pattern of spending time with God, encourage them to make a plan with specifics to start building a new habit this week. Depending on your group, you may want to leave more time for discussion of how or why students want to incorporate time with God in their lives. Feel free to share your own experience/struggles when it comes to making time and space to be alone with God in your daily life. Remind students that prayer doesn't have to be complicated to be effective, and you don't have to follow a strict pattern. However, having a plan of where and when you will pray can make it much easier to make it a habit so that it is a regular part of your life.

**Breathe In:** Read James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Remind the students that making the effort to get closer to God is the most important step to making that change because God helps us. (Leader's note: You may want to post this passage to your students via Facebook, Twitter or text three days after the lesson to help remind them of the verse.)

**Breathe Out:** Suggest that students choose two ideas from the brainstorming chart as a new way to experience prayer this week. They may even want to attempt this with a friend (e.g. meeting each day after school for five minutes to pray together). Next week you can leave time for students to share what was different about praying at a different time, in a different place, or in a different position than usual.

# Breathe

## Module: PEOPLE WHO BREATHED

### Lesson 3: THE EARLY CHURCH

#### Objectives:

- Students will distinguish the importance of practicing our faith within a community, as opposed to being a “lone wolf.”
- Students will understand the example of the early church described in Acts 2:42-47.

#### Materials Needed

- Vehicle(s) to push across a parking lot (or other heavy objects with seats)
- Copies of Acts 2:42-47 printed on paper (one per student)
- Different coloured markers or pencil crayons
- Blank paper

## **Minds On**

**Leader's Note:** If you used Lesson 2 from this module last week about Daniel and prayer, and if it suits your group, you could start by asking students how they experienced prayer this past week, if they started any new habits.

**Prompt:** The last lesson was about the importance of spending regular time with God no matter what changes happen in your life. Today we are going to learn the importance of practicing our faith WITH OTHERS.

**Leader's Note:** Depending on the size of your group, this activity can be an illustration, or you can turn it into a competition. Obviously make safety your first priority and do not have this activity on a hill, near traffic, etc. No student should ever be in the path of an oncoming vehicle.

In your church parking lot, challenge a student (or leader) to push a vehicle from one side to the other. If they are able to do it, up the ante by having other students get in the vehicle to increase the difficulty.

Next, have a team (or multiple teams depending on your numbers and the space) attempt the same task. If you have a large group, two teams could race to push their vehicles across the parking lot. Each vehicle should be “driven” by an adult leader to steer and brake when the challenge has been completed. Students who are not physically able to participate can ride in the vehicle to experience the activity.

**Leader's Note:** If you do not have the space/resources to move a vehicle, you could get the same idea across by moving couches/stacks of chairs - something heavy enough that it requires a team of people.

After the activity, gather the group in the space where the rest of your study will take place and allow them to discuss the activity. Start with the following questions:

- Would it ever be possible to move a vehicle from one place to another all by yourself? (Even if you were really strong, you need someone to push and someone to steer and brake.)
- Is there anything like that in Christianity? How do we help each other do more together than we could ever do on our own?

## **Action**

Distribute copies of the passage for this lesson to all your students and read (or have a volunteer read) Acts 2:42-47. Hand out different coloured markers or pencil crayons, and have the students work independently to circle or underline with one colour all of the activities that show HOW the believers did life together and use a different colour to mark the RESULTS of these activities.

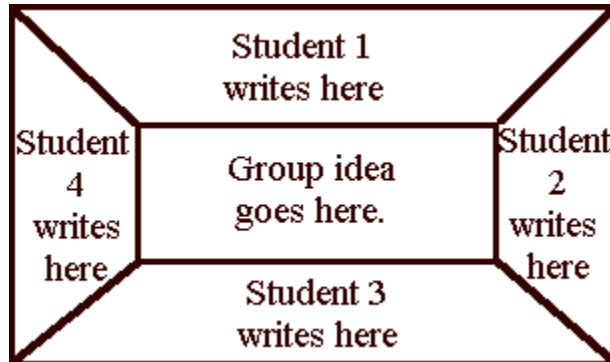
Based on what they circled/underlined, ask the large group:

- What did the believers do TOGETHER that they couldn't do on their own?
- What activities from this passage take place in our church/youth group?
- Would these activities be possible in another club or team? What, if anything, makes youth group unique?
- How might you react if a healing miracle happened at youth group?

**Think/Pair/Share:** Give students time to think about the following question for a minute or so, and then have them share their answer with a partner before discussing as a whole group. **Ask:** How would your friendships at youth group be different if you met together every day?

## Consolidate/Debrief

Have students form groups of 3-5 people, and give each group enough pens for each person, and one blank piece of paper with instructions to draw a shape in the middle with lines coming off to create a section for each student in the group. (see below)



Each student will write their ideas in one outer section of the place mat, and when everyone is done, the group will rotate the paper to read what the person beside them wrote. They can add any ideas or thoughts they have, then turn the paper again and repeat until everyone has read each person's section. Then, as a group, they can discuss and boil down the main point/biggest idea and write it in the center shape on the page.

Have the students write their thoughts about, "What specific activities could help this youth group become more like the early church?" You may consider writing this question on a white board or piece of chart paper to help students remember the question and stay focused.

After the activity, have each group share what they wrote in the center of their page.

**Breathe In:** Have students reflect in prayer on this passage: Romans 12:4-5 "Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other."

**Breathe Out:** Have students plan to get together with at least one other student during this week to practice one of the activities from the passage (prayer, Bible study, sharing a

meal together, giving to the needy). As a leader, you can facilitate this by contacting a local community group and having an evening or Saturday planned for your students to help out.

Acts 2:42-47

“[The believers] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42-47

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# Breathe

## Module: PEOPLE WHO BREATHED

### Lesson 4: PETER

#### Objectives:

- Students will see that no one is ever beyond hope: Peter is an example of someone who totally failed, and yet was redeemed by Jesus to become great.
- Students will identify past failures and dedicate them to God, allowing them to move forward towards living without fear, regret or shame.

#### Materials Needed

- “Life of Peter” fact sheet and scissors for each group of students
- Chart paper or Bristol board
- Tape
- Strips of blank paper and pens
- Lighter or book of matches
- Bucket with sand or water



## **Minds On**

**Prompt:** Today we will talk about the apostle Peter, who experienced many ups and downs in his relationship with Jesus, and we'll see there is a lot we can learn from his life.

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3 for this opening activity and give each group a fact sheet and a pair of scissors. The fact sheet lists a number of things we know about Peter's life from scripture. Instruct the students to cut out the facts and categorize them as either ordinary, extraordinary, or disappointing/a failure.

When the groups have sorted their facts, have them discuss together where each fact belongs and tape them in groups on a piece of chart paper or Bristol board for display during the lesson.

## **Action**

**Prompt:** We have seen that Peter's life was a bit of a rollercoaster ride, but what does that have to do with us? Let's focus in on three different stories that show Peter's development as a follower of Christ and see what he went through that we can relate to.

The first story has Peter making big promises of faithfulness to Jesus.  
Have a student read Mark 14:26-31.

Allow students to discuss the passage, prompting them with questions such as:

- Jesus quotes some scripture to the disciples. Who is the shepherd, and who represents the sheep?
- Where does Jesus say he will go after he is risen?
- How does Peter respond? Do you think he really listened to what Jesus was saying?

The next story is found in Mark 14:43-54; 66-72.

**Prompt:** The book of John also records this story and he names Peter as the disciple who cut off the high priest's servant's ear. In a way he did keep his promise to stand by Jesus. However, when Jesus allowed himself to be arrested, everybody ran away.

Ask your students to discuss these questions, dividing into smaller groups if necessary.

- What do you think Peter expected when he said he would die with Jesus?
- Why do you think Peter denied knowing Jesus?
- Have you ever made a promise to someone that you did not keep? What caused you to break that promise? (This could be a good question to have students discuss with a partner or small group rather than the whole group.)
- How do you think Peter felt when he realized Jesus' words had come true?

When your students have finished discussing, have them come back together.

**Prompt:** The last story we'll read about Peter took place after Jesus rose from the dead, spent time with his disciples, and went up to Heaven. When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in Jerusalem, they were able to speak in all kinds of languages, and it caused quite a stir among Jews who were visiting from different parts of the empire. Peter preached a sermon to explain what was happening and tell everyone about Jesus, and this passage tells us what happened next.

Have someone read Acts 2:37-41, then ask the group:

- Who does Peter say the promise is for?
- Did people believe his message?
- How do you think Peter felt on this day compared to the last story we read?

**Prompt:** In the warm up activity, we categorized a promise that Jesus made to Peter (Matthew 16:18). Yet again Jesus' words came true, but this time it was for a great promise, not a big failure. Jesus knew that Peter would have ups and downs, and he

loved him just as he was. Peter ultimately succeeded (and went on to perform amazing miracles and be a leader in the church) because he didn't let his failures and disappointments stop him from trusting and obeying Jesus.

## **Consolidate/Debrief**

Give students time to reflect on any disappointments or failures in their own life that are obstacles to their faith and/or obedience to Jesus. Allow them to share with the group if they want, but it can also be a private reflection. Distribute strips of paper so students can write down one major thing they need to overcome or move on from in their walk with God. Once they have written this obstacle on the paper, take the group to a fire-safe area (outside if possible) with a bucket filled with sand or water. If a fire is not an option, consider using a shredder or simply having students tear up their paper and deposit the scraps in a garbage can.

**Breathe In:** Pray as a group to commit these concerns to God and ask Jesus to overcome every obstacle that has been written down. Thank God for the example of Peter's life that even an ordinary person who made big mistakes was not beyond hope.

**Breathe Out:** After the prayer, students can take turns burning their piece of paper over the bucket to symbolically give it to God and release it from their life.

**Leader's Note:** There may be some very significant, deep issues a student may be dealing with. Be prepared to have yourself or a leader walk with a student in those. Be cognizant as well to appropriately involve others (whether your pastor or a professional) if you (or the other leaders) are not qualified to deal with certain situations.

## The Life of Peter

Before he was a disciple, he was a fisherman. Matthew 4:18	He was willing to die with Jesus. Matthew 26:35	He preached a sermon that made 3000 converts. Acts 2:38-41
Jesus miraculously healed his mother-in-law of a fever. Matthew 8:14-15	When he heard Jesus had been raised to life, he ran to check the tomb. Luke 24:12	He healed a beggar who was lame. Acts 3:6-7
He walked on water. Matthew 14:29	He denied knowing Jesus. Matthew 26:69-70	His shadow was believed to have healing powers. Acts 5:15
He didn't always understand Jesus' teaching. Matthew 15:15	He saw Jesus raise a dead girl back to life. Mark 5:37-42	He defied authorities who told him to stop preaching. Acts 4:19; 5:29
Jesus promised to build the church through him. Matthew 16:18	He gave up everything to follow Jesus. Mark 10:28	He healed a paralyzed man. Acts 9:32-34
He understood Jesus' mission. Matthew 16:16-17	He fell asleep while praying. Matthew 26:40	He raised a woman from the dead. Acts 9:40
He did not understand Jesus' mission. Matthew 16:23	He completely trusted Jesus. John 6:66-69	He was miraculously freed from prison. Acts 12:5-11
He asked Jesus for advice. Matthew 18:21	He defended Jesus with a sword. John 18:10	

# Breathe

## Module: PEOPLE WHO BREATHED

### Lesson 5: MARY (SISTER OF MARTHA AND LAZARUS)

#### Objectives:

- Students will see the importance of balance in our spirituality: a willingness to learn from Jesus and to serve Him.
- Students will be prepared to integrate new activities in their life to fuel their walk with God.

#### Materials Needed

- Paper and a pen for each student (scrap paper is fine)
- Bibles for students
- Chart paper and marker

## **Minds On**

Hand out paper and pens to students and ask them to list three things they can do for God. It could be things they already do, or an idea they have not yet put into practice. If appropriate for the size of your group and the comfort of your students, invite students to share one or all of the activities they listed with each other to compare and share ideas.

**Think/Pair/Share:** Give students time to think about the following question for a minute or so, and then have them share their answer with a partner before discussing as a whole group. **Ask:** If Jesus came to visit you at your home, which of the things on your list would be most important to do? If nothing really fits, try to think of one thing you'd do to make Jesus feel welcome.

After allowing some time for discussion, gather the group together and invite some students to share their answers.

## **Action**

Have your students turn in their Bibles to Luke 10:38-42 and have a student read the passage aloud. Depending how familiar your students are with the story, or if the discussion is slow to get started, it may be useful to have a second volunteer read the passage a second time. Use the following questions:

- Were there any words or details from the story stood out to you?
- What brought Jesus to visit Mary and Martha?
- Do you think Jesus was upset with Martha? Why or why not?
- Do you think you are more like Mary or Martha? How so?

Next, have your students look in their Bibles at the passage before the story of Mary and Martha - it is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Depending on your group, you may have someone read the parable, or use the following summary: The story before this passage in Luke tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. In it, there are three people who pass by an injured man on the road, but only the last one, the Samaritan, stops to help. The first two are a priest and Levite, and both of these people would have been considered very holy and important to God. After all, they served in the temple; it was practically their job to worship and serve God!

Invite your students to discuss why the priest and Levite ignored the man on the side of the road. (e.g. Maybe they were afraid it was a trap, or maybe they were rushing to get somewhere and didn't want to stop.)

### **Consolidate/Debrief**

Connect the two stories by **asking your students:** Do you think this story adds anything to the story of Mary and Martha? (**Leader's Note:** If anyone does, you can discuss, but if not you can move on.)

**Prompt:** These two stories are side by side in Luke's gospel on purpose. They show two sides of the same coin: how to live for Jesus! Living for Jesus is a lot like breathing: you have to bring air into your lungs and breathe it out or else you'll suffocate. If you only ever breathe in, the air in your lungs will turn stale and there won't be room for the fresh air your body needs, but if you breathe out and don't let any fresh air in, you end up with the same problem, probably feeling dizzy or even passing out.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and Levite show us what happens when someone breathes in and in and in by worshipping God and serving in the Temple, but they couldn't bring themselves to serve someone outside of their comfort zone. Martha is an example of someone so busy being a good host (breathing out, out, out!) that Jesus was in her living room, and all she did was complain her sister wasn't helping. She missed the whole point of Jesus' visit - spending time together.

Divide a piece of chart paper into two halves, labelling one side “breathing in” and the other “breathing out.” Have students brainstorm what activities in their life help them breathe in or breathe out in their relationship with God.

**Breathe In:** Have students choose one item from the “breathing in” column on your T chart to put into practice this week, and ask them to share their choice with a partner.

**Breathe Out:** Have students also choose one thing from the “breathing out” column and again tell their partner. Hopefully your students can encourage each other throughout the week or at least check in next week to see how things went.

As a leader, feel free to encourage your students in their “breathing” exercises through the week on Facebook/Twitter, by texting, by phone or in person, whatever is most suitable for your group.