



Season 1, Episode 4: “Breathing Room”

Hey there friends, come on in! Well, it's November, and if you're like most women, then your resting heart rate probably just amped up 20 extra beats per minute, because “’tis the season of more” has begun. *More* to do, *more* places to go, *more* to cook, *more* to feed, *more* to buy, *more* to wrap, *more* to decorate, *more* to celebrate, just *more*. It's life and more of it, and if you're a woman, no matter what your season or position in life, about 90% more has just been added to your already full plate.

You remember when you couldn't wait until Christmas? And now... don't we usually lament, we can't wait until Christmas is over? Well, okay, you know how it goes... you're on the airplane, all buckled in and ready to take off, and the flight attendant starts her drill. "In the event of a drop in cabin pressure, the oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Please place the oxygen mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting others." Well, *nothing* drops more pressure into our little cabins and our lives like the holiday season.

So I've got one word for you friend, ***breathe***. For today and tomorrow, for the next 60 days and beyond, when you feel overwhelmed, when you're gasping for breath, because there is just a crazy amount of life on your plate, *don't forget to breathe*. I get it that this is real life, it is. It's busy and it's full, and I am not preaching to you what I'm not echoing to myself.

Y'all, I actually have friends that have all their Christmas gifts wrapped by Labor Day. Yes, *Labor Day*. And I am truly happy for them, *maybe*. But that's not me, and it's probably not you either. I lean more to the side of the spectrum that says, "Oh, it's December 1st? Well, that's okay. I've got two full weeks to get it all wrapped and in the mail." I can get overwhelmed just thinking about all the little details that keeps stacking up, and stacking up into this overwhelming “Mount Everest” in my mind and heart.

But to whichever end of the spectrum you fall, this message today is for you. It's for all of us, to keep us breathing in the holiday season and enjoying the holidays for what they are, celebrations of thankfulness to our God, for his goodness to us, and for the birth of the one who came to deliver us from the sin and the chaos of this world, and gave us a new way to live in him. So right smack dab in the middle of the busiest season of the year, I am going to remind you and strongly encourage you- no, I'm going to be bossy and just *tell you what to do*.

Sister, you have absolutely got to breathe. If you don't, you'll most likely end up holding your breath and suffocating your joy, and becoming an absolute killjoy to the world around you. So right now as a holiday hustle begins, we are going to get a grip on our lives and on ourselves, and take a seat at the feet of Jesus in the breathing room, and learn to breathe, because I'm telling you right now, *you cannot afford not to do this.* In fact, the more overwhelmed you feel by all you're about to head into, the more critical it is that you choose to do this, and recalibrate under the truth of the scriptures that says, "God first. Before anything else, God."

Psalm 61:2-3 in The Message says this, "When I am overwhelmed by life, when I'm far from anywhere down to my last gasp, I call out, 'Guide me...' You've always given me breathing room, a place to get away from it all." Gosh, that's exactly what we all need, and it's what God creates for us when he says, "Put me first." Breathing room for me is this: it's the intentional space we choose to make in our daily life, the time we take and the place we create with Jesus to devote time with him in his word. My friend Michelle says it best, it's that time to "quiet the busy," and boy, do we need to.

The Bible is filled with this holy warning to *stop and breathe*. Throughout the Psalms, which is a book of songs, you see this word, *selah*, S-E-L-A-H. It's repeated over, and over, and over again, and it's a musical term that means interlude, and it can be translated, "pause in God's presence." So what does this look like for us, this breathing room? What does it look like for now and for always? Well, let's start with the scriptures and let them teach us.

So I'm going to read to you from Luke 10:38-42, it's the story of Martha and her sister Mary. You probably have heard it before and you may know the story by heart, but do you know it by life? So listen in as I read. "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house, and she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'"

I love this lesson for so many reasons- this story of these two sisters. First of all, before we get off on "one sister was right, one sister was wrong, one sister was good, one sister was bad," just know that Jesus would not have been there and Mary would not have been sitting at Jesus' feet, had Martha not opened her door to Jesus. So Martha clearly was the one that invited Jesus in. These women are two disciples of Jesus. This is just a matter of priorities, but look with me again. He didn't even scold Martha for serving, he said she was *distracted with much serving*.

She was **over-serving**, she was **overdoing**. She was probably just preoccupied with all of these little incidental details, and she asked him, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" Well, she wanted help, but did she really want help or was she just trying to get attention? Who knows? But the thing is, she was distracted and she was doing too much. That word picture for distracted is kind of like when you go to the rodeo, and you

see one of those baby calves being lassoed by their feet and by their neck, and then the cowboys pull them in different directions. That's the mental picture. It's like this crowd in your head, and they're pulling you in all these different directions. That's what Martha was doing.

So it's not a lesson of good sister versus bad sister– this is a lesson in re-prioritizing our life. It's a choice to live un-distracted versus distracted, to choose the essential over the incidental, to choose the important over the urgent. Important things speak strongly and soundly, "This thing must be done." Urgent things scream and shout loudly, "Do this now, do more, do it faster, and do it all!"

So the festivities, the celebrations and parties, and shopping, and all of that– they're not bad things y'all– but there's a right way to do all of this and there's a wrong way.

- Mary, we see was devoted, while Martha was distracted.
- Mary chose to make time to listen so that she would know what to do with her life. Martha chose to make a big deal about the things that would not matter in two hours or two days, or even in eternity.
- Mary's heart was focused on listening to and taking time to be with Jesus. Martha's heart was focused on serving and doing things for Jesus.
- Mary wanted to hear from Jesus, Martha wanted to impress Jesus.

All the *good* in our life can easily and quickly become the *enemy of the best* when it pulls the focus of our heart away from Jesus. Here's the thing, we cannot do the work for Jesus without Jesus, without spending time with Him, choosing to listen to Jesus, so that we know what he wants us to do and the way to do it. This is in the Bible, y'all. It's not legalism. It's the truth, and even more, it's our sanity and it's our hope.

Let's notice the context of the Martha and Mary story. Just before this story in the same chapter, Luke 10:25-28, Jesus has a short conversation with a lawyer, a legal expert, and he comes up to test Jesus saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus answers him, "what is written in the law? How do you read it?" And the lawyer answers, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live."

This is the greatest commandment that Jesus also repeats in Matthew 22, it's the first commandment, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. To love God first, most, and best." So loving God first is a command, but it's a command to live a way of life that is supposed to permeate everything we do. So you can only love others to the degree that you love yourself, and you can only love yourself to the degree that you know and believe God's love for you. But you and I will only ever know that if we take time to sit with Jesus, to listen to him as he speaks to us through the scriptures, and then to let that metabolize into our life and heart practically.

Loving God first has got to become our lifestyle every day, not just when it's convenient. And of course, there's always grace. There's grace for when we don't put him first and make time for him. There's grace and more grace, the scripture says. But y'all, I want more of Jesus, instead of more grace to get by on just a little bit of him, you know?

All right, so how do we do this, and where do we start? We recalibrate and we eliminate. That's what we've got to do. Recalibrate under God's truth, and that happens in the breathing room with our Bibles open, and then we get to eliminate what's not important. Eliminate the distractions, the urgent, and the unnecessary. You know, you don't have to say yes to every cotton-picking thing out there. Give yourself permission to say no.

1. Jealously guard your relationship with Jesus during this season and always. Choose to spend time with him daily, like Mary did. That is the necessary thing.
2. Breathe in his Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that, "All scripture is God-breathed." Breathe it in every single day. Remember, you are a spiritual being, and you need spiritual air to breathe. God's word gives us that. Martin Luther said, "We need to hear the gospel every day, because we forget the gospel every day."
3. Learn to say no to the urgent, in order to give your best to the important. It's for your own spiritual, mental, and physical good, y'all, and the good of those around you. Saying no to something is saying yes to something else. So what in your life needs a yes right now? What can you say no or no thank you to, or no, not for now? Saying no thank you and no, not for now, is the safest, healthiest, wisest, and most sane thing you can learn to do.
4. Say no to comparing yourself with everyone else, your decorations, your gifts, your outfit, your cookies (just saying). *You and your life and the way you do it is good enough, girl!* Your identity and worth aren't dependent upon your Christmas cookies.
5. Before you make your plans for the season and your to-do list for the day, plan time with Jesus first. Check your priorities. Are they in order? What are you anxious about? What is the *much*, the busy-ness of life that you're being driven about with right now? Are you worried and anxious about many things like Martha, or are you focused and listening to Jesus? Spending time in his presence with, time and the breathing room, and as you go along the way throughout your day.

My friend Kathy Peel, The Family Manager, said something years ago that I will never forget, and even though it really pertains to moms with young kids, I think it's a word that we could all heed. She said this, "Will your kids remember that you were always rushing around going everywhere and doing everything for everybody, while they were in the backseat of the car, or will they remember that home was a great place to be, and mom was a fun person to be with?" *Gosh, y'all.* We really don't want to be all grinchy and grouchy, and hurried and harassed. We have got to breathe, girls. Breathe with Jesus, because out of the overflow of our relationship with Jesus, everything else happens better. It flows, it floats on spiritual air.

So take time in the breathing room with Him right now. Remember what Psalm 61:2-3 said, "When I am overwhelmed by life, when I am far from anywhere, down to my last gasp, I call

out, 'Guide me. Lord.' You've always given me breathing room, a place to get away from it all."

Okay, y'all, that's that for that, and don't you forget that you are greatly and dearly loved by the King. So take a breath with him today.

xo -P