

Series: **BREATHING ROOM** - January 17, 2010

**EMOTIONAL ENERGY**  
**Matthew 11:28-30; John 16:33**

1. Someone recently sent me this note on Inner Peace. See if it describes you:

**If you can start the day without caffeine,  
If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,  
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,  
If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,  
If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,  
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,  
If you can conquer tension without medical help,  
If you can relax without liquor,  
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,  
....Then you are probably the family dog!!**

-How many of you, right about now, would **like** to be the family dog! There are a **lot** of pressures—just in living in our culture, aren't there? The time we are living in has been described as a time of overload. That our lives are marginless; bulging at the seams with more information, more stuff, more time pressures and emotional pressures than we have the capacity to live with and be at peace.

- a. Two weeks ago, we talked about building **physical** margin into our lives; taking care of an incredible gift we've been given. Our bodies. Did you know that there is also something called **emotional** energy? And that if you drain that tank, it can cause a **lot** of pain?

-One of the ten commandments Moses received from God was to **remember the Sabbath**—or the seventh day—and set it apart. No work. People over the years have gotten pretty weird about this principle of a **day off**—like maybe boredom and slug-dom was pleasing to God. Jesus said:

**The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27 NLT)**

It was God's way of saying, “You can't just go 24/7 and be healthy in **any** way! The Sabbath was the **margin** in any given week; white space; rest; quiet—to restore our emotional and physical reserves.

- b. In our world the expression used to describe the opposite of emotional energy goes something like this: **I'm all stressed out!** Or, **That totally stresses me out!** If a parent doesn't say that about themselves, their teen will, **I asked her if I could go to the mall and, like, she's all stressed out and stuff!**

-We hear the word, **stress** a lot. It actually came out of the field of mechanical engineering to refer to what happens to a piece of metal when you keep stretching it—bending it back and forth. An incident happened about 20 years

ago that brought that concept front and center. Anyone remember the picture of this the Aloha Airlines jet that lost a huge chunk of the fuselage back in 1988?



When a cabin is pressurized and depressurized again and again—with a combination of salt and humidity—this is what happens. Pretty scary, isn't it?

-Stress is normal—and is necessary for developing muscles, brains—anything, really. But when there's no let-up--stress turns to **distress** and begins to destroy us emotionally. Stress triggers are adrenal glands and adrenaline pours into our system—which is great if you have to fight a battle or run from a bear—as least faster than the **other** people who are camping with you. And **sprint** drugs in a marathon world don't work well. This release of energy leads to exhaustion. Remember—we are humans; we have **limits**. And there is a limited supply of emotional energy in our tank—and it **has** to be replenished.

- c. We are living in a culture where the changes taking place are **massive**. Every time we face more information, work complexities, frustrations at home and in traffic—along with the other changes that **demand** that we adjust—there's this release of adrenaline and energy to cope with life. But like that jet out of Hawaii—expanding, contracting, expanding, contracting—along with other corrosive factors—has consequences. And every day we see these high-flying stressed out, hair-on-fire people begin to lose big chunks of their lives. The most obvious consequence, at least in our world, is depression. The emotional tank—intended to give **and** receive energy—goes dry. We just get exhausted, overwhelmed—and sometimes, burned out.

2. Humans have **always** had problems—and faced a certain amount of emotional stress in everyday life. But with exponential change in **every** area—and just trying to assimilate the information coming at us with no let-up, it's **way** different. And we are doing all this on less sleep, with less support—and less down time than ever before. And we are exposed 24/7, through the media, to all the other chaos and fear in the world created by 6.7 billion people. If the earthquake in Haiti had happened 50 years ago, Walter Cronkite would've reported it from his desk instead of Anderson Cooper giving live updates 24/7 on all the details of the pain and sorrow and loss.

-We, as a culture, are not at all coping well with this pressure. Anti-depressants were the single most widely prescribed drug in North America then—and still are—at 116 million prescriptions a year in the US alone—beating out, believe it or not—pain relief prescriptions.

3. Believe it or not, my goal is **not** to depress you—simply to point out that if you feel stressed and overwhelmed—there's a reason! And you do **not** have to live that way. You need to figure out what's draining your tank—and what refills it. Like this freezer chest, your emotional tank doesn't just have a drain—it has a lid. And there's **also** a way to build emotional margin back into our lives.

-First, I want to point out that emotional overload is not just a phenomena of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are several people in the Bible who experienced it—and it's interesting to see what happens.

- a. The first example, is Moses, surprisingly. Moses got stressed out! He had been groomed in the intensity of Pharaoh's household—as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. From what we can tell, he was being prepared for a high profile position in Egypt. Then, in what seems to be a cruel twist of fate, he's exiled to the wilderness—and spends the next 40 years caring for sheep. -And then, at the age of 80, he's called of God to lead the Israelites out of slavery—and into their own land. This was a **massive** change of pace from the quiet of the wilderness—where he had lots of time and space to think, dream, talk to God, doodle in the sand, throw stones. And he had the intimacy of a small community with him, too.

-But that that whiplash is apparently not what stressed Moses. The hardest part of Moses' job was leading at least 2 million whining, complaining people on a 40 year camping trip in the wilderness. City slickers who don't know a water hole from a septic tank!

-It was stressful and scary for them—and all that junk got dumped on Moses. First they were filled with fear--then rage. At first Moses seems quite calm about the whole thing. God is frustrated at their complaining and idolatry—and threatens to nuke the whole lot of them and start over with Moses. Moses, in essence, tells God to chill out and not do anything rash. But after several crises—well, listen to Moses in his own words:

**And Moses said to the LORD, “Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms like a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors? I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favor and spare me this misery!” (Numbers 11:11-12, 14 NLT)**

-Tell me—does Moses sound a little stressed and overloaded? Notice the words he uses to describe what's stressing him out. **The burden of all these people...carry them...I can't carry all these people...The load is too heavy.** These are **margin** words—**overload** words.

- b. Put that on hold. Another example is Elijah. Elijah has just had this major, major showdown—he's been to the mountaintop and won a major victory over the false god, Ba'al, who was worshipped and sponsored by an evil queen. Anyone ever heard the name, Jezebel? That's who it was. The people choose to worship God; the Queen Jezebel is humiliated; the priests of Ba'al are taken down—and Elijah gives the command for rain to stop the 3 year drought.

- God gave Elijah special strength to run beside the King Ahab's, chariot back to the palace—17 miles!. And then it's like Elijah's emotional energy tank hits 'E'. In a rage, Jezebel threatens his life. Listen to what happens to this guy of **amazing** courage and stamina:

**Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. (1 Kings 19:3-5 NLT)**

-Look at the words: ***Afraid...ran for his life...prayed that he might die...fell asleep.*** Elijah hit this incredible high—but the valley **after** it was even lower. In our culture, this is called **burn-out**?

- c. It's interesting to see what happens in each of these instances. Moses had been advised before this incident to get help. He took his father-in-law, Jethro, to work with him one day. With a name like Jethro—you expect some guy who carries a shot-gun and plays the jug. I imagine Moses, at the end of a really tough day—exhausted, eyes looking like fried eggs with ketchup on them—asking Jethro, "So, *Dad*, what did you think?"

-Jethro's response is **very** wise. He says,

**You're going to wear yourself out—and the people too. *This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself!* (Exodus 18:18 NLT)**

i.e., pace yourself—and **get help!**

-Well, when Moses finally reached his limit and cried out for help, God placed his Spirit on 70 other leaders—and they helped Moses **carry** the load. See, the deal is that if your burden is too heavy—it's crushing you, stealing your joy, making you wish you were dead—then you're probably carrying more than God ever intended.

- d. God worked differently with Elijah. He wasn't faced with a crowd needy, whining people; he was faced with fear—and a deep sense of exhaustion and aloneness. As you read on through his story, God cares for his practical needs with food and rest—and gives his body and spirit the rest they need. And then God reveals himself—not with power, but in a quiet voice.

-And God shows Elijah that he's **not** alone—and that his mission isn't over! He still has kings to anoint and influence. And finally, God gives Elijah a friend with a heart like his own; Elisha—who would never leave his side. And then Elijah finishes **very** well!

4. How do **you** want to finish? Can I say something to you—as gently as I possibly can? How you're doing right now, the pace you're going at, your level of emotional

exhaustion, and how seriously you take margin will likely make a difference in how well you finish.

-Now, does that mean it's God's will that everything go well for us, we have no troubles—and die at the age of 95 with money in the bank and a smile on our face? The night before Jesus went to the cross, He gave His Disciples a reality check about how the Spirit would help them with the difficult journey that lay ahead of them. Then He said:

**"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."  
(John 16:33 NLT)**

-What can we expect as part of the world system? The answer would be, **TROUBLE**. Jesus gift to those who follow Him is—peace—because He has overcome, conquered, and is at **work** in the world system.

-Some of you are in the middle of an intense time right now—and it's not like you can just opt out of life and pretend that the stuff you're going through isn't there. What you need to think about is what is draining your tank. Do you know? For some people, conflict is just part of the game. For others—it totally drains their battery. For some of you, having a pile of people around you jazzes you—fills your tank. For others—that wears you out.

-Maybe you need some help managing stress—and managing your emotional energy so you don't permanently damage yourself. Some of you might be living under the constant stress of debt—or conflict in your home—and you need some help just figuring out **what** to do. Some of you are getting fire-hosed by life; it's all coming at you very fast--and you're eating adrenalin for breakfast, lunch and dinner—and for your midnight snack.

- a. There's a part of this peace and strength that comes from learning to be with God in a way that gives you wisdom, hope, and perspective.

-There are some words I read over and over to myself—and speak on whenever I get the chance. I find myself praying them almost every morning. It's Psalm 23: Listen to the words:

**The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.  
(Psalm 23:1-4 NLT)**

-You need to know that David wasn't just noodling on his guitar one day—and came up with this song. David knew what it was like to hit the wall! David started out as the golden boy of Israel. He took down Goliath, led army in victory—and had all the teeny-boppers writing songs about how groovy he was.

He even married the king's daughter! But then his life got flipped upside down—simply because the king was jealous—and he lost his job, his position, his home, his friends, his wife—everything.

-So he gets this group of 400 rabble-rousers around him—but even *that* goes bad. One day they all come back from a mission and find out that a raiding army has come and taken their wives and families—and all they own.

Listen to this:

**David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the LORD his God. (1 Samuel 30:6 NLT)**

- b. David found that the Lord, the Good Shepherd, is enough. That when we are pressed to the limits, He knows where the green pastures and peaceful streams are. He knows the path to our souls, *how* to renew our strength—our *soul*. And He knows where we need to go next. And in those times when we're scared, uncertain of the future, overwhelmed—He knows how to release us from fear.
- c. Somehow, though, we need to understand that we can't just do everything the world system thinks we should do—and God will just untie all the knots we get our lives in. Jesus said, in speaking to people worn out by the empty promises of religion:

**Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)**

-Jesus is saying, "You can stay on the path you're on—and get more weary and carry more burdens—and *die* under the load. Or you can find rest. I'll teach you how to find rest for your souls. Jesus isn't promising a burden-free, care-free life; He's saying that if we will go *His way*, He can teach us how to rest our souls. He offers a life that fits. The life He trains us in fits with reality. It fits us. And it doesn't lead to stressed out, burnt out living—it leads to *life!*

- 5. How's your emotional energy level. Are you sensing that, for the most part, life is working for you—or working you over? Do you feel hopeful? Does the thought of the future wear you out—or bring at least *some* energy? And how are your relationships? Are you whining—snapping at people? Do you find yourself living in self-pity land?

Are you tending to feel overwhelmed—and fearful? For us to finish well and think clearly, I believe that we will have to find out what is draining our emotional energy and making life a chore—and *also* find out what fills our tank and makes us more hopeful and resilient.

- a. First, when it comes to emotional energy, it helps to know how big your reservoir is—and what drills holes in the bottom and drains it. How many of you have ever seen a gas gauge on a car? Does anybody here pay attention to it? You **want** to know how much you have—and whether it's enough to get you to the next gas station, right?

-For example. If you're an introvert, being around people too much will drill holes in your tank. That means you probably don't want to work as a waitress or a politician. The chances of living in the desert are not that great—so you will have to just be wise about the amount and length of contact you have. If you're married to a flaming extrovert—you may have to build a sound proof party room just for them.

-Do **you** know what drills holes in your tank?

- b. Sometimes there are people who, when they're around you, want to drill holes, hook up tubes, and siphon your tank into theirs. That will mean that you'll have to set up some boundaries. Road blocks. That's hard, but for your sake—you may have to do it.

-Lots of things can drill holes in your tank. Financial stress. A job that demands more hours and energy than you have. A marriage that's raw and chafed. A bad relationship with your parents. University classes. Don't just try to suck it up and ignore it—deal with it. Get help! Send up the trouble flares!

6. And then there are things that patch the holes and fill your tank. Bill Hybels—one of the strongest persons I've ever met tells the story of how he hit the wall a number of years ago. He had his act totally together physically and spiritually; but he forgot about the emotional tank and almost crashed and burned. He said, "The way I was doing God's work was destroying God's work in **me!**"

-He had to change his work schedule—and find something he **loved** doing. For him—it was sailing. Everyone needs to know specifically what it is that re-energizes them. For me—it's either being in the woods—or by the water—or, surprisingly—**cooking!** Very weird, I know. But there are other basics—basics **Jesus** taught to people who follow His way.

- a. One if the principles of the **Sabbath**. Taking a break. Emotional energy is very dependent on us getting the sleep we need, the break we need, and the space we need from our work. We need alone time with God. Some of the most rest-deprived people on the planet are single parents—or parents of young children.
- b. And that brings us to another primary need when it comes to emotional energy. A support network. Having close relationships with others is life-giving. We were created in God's image as relational beings. We need the love and support of others. By the way, the research on this shows that people who have a support network around them live longer and healthier lives—and that this factor is more important even than **diet** when it comes to health!

-Now, that can be a problem in a mobile world like ours, can't it—to the point where you feel that you **can't** get a break? My relatives are scattered all over North America—which means I need to actively cultivate another support network. Many of you are in that same place and I would encourage you to do that here at The Olive Branch for your own sake. We have a support system called **Roots Groups**. Everyone needs roots that nourish them—and keep them standing when the storms come.

-Maybe one of the best gifts we can give to one another in our support networks is the opportunity to take a break. Caring for a young couple's children—or a single parent's child—so they can get a break.

- c. And that brings us to another surprising way to restore emotional energy that Jesus taught: serve others. Anyone heard of that before? We were made in the image of God—who, when He showed up here, said that He came to **serve**, not **be served**. Trying to get other people to serve you, listen to you, give you the attention you crave is drains them—and you! Serving others with a glad heart takes our eyes off of ourselves and our problems, it does good for others—and because of that, it's personally rewarding and it pleases God. And because we're doing what, at the core, we were made to do—it fills our tank.
- d. Just as whole relationships build our reserves and help us find margin, broken relationships drill holes in our tank. Big ones! And we **patch** those holes when we seek—and give forgiveness. Jesus taught forgiveness over and over and over! Forgiving others—reconciling broken relationships whenever possible—is one of the most spiritually and emotionally healthy things you can do. When you hold a grudge against someone and refuse to deal with it—you damage their tank and yours. And if you try to fill your tank and restore emotional energy—it's like holding water in one of these. A sieve! Forgiveness and reconciliation is one of God's most powerful gifts.

-One secular author I read compares holding grudges to working in a control tower at an airport—one of the most stress-filled jobs in the world. It takes a lot of effort to keep all those planes in the air, to remember where they are—and keep them from crashing into each other. His advice? **Land the planes!**

- e. There are a number of other things you and I can do—but one of the most powerful ways to fill your tank is to practice gratitude. Is there plenty in life to be unhappy about? Of course there is. And you and I need to acknowledge that end of the spectrum. But expressing gratitude is one of the clearest commands throughout the Bible. See, when you and I look for things in life to be grateful for—we choose **not** to just see the problems and irritants and hassles.

-Gratitude has the potential to take our eyes off of ourselves and see what God is up to. It helps us see others with fresh eyes. And I believe it has the potential to bring joy to our hearts. Anyone here ever met a grateful, grumpy person? Gratitude is powerful medicine for a grumpy, crabby soul that sees the dark, sad side of everything!

**Q & A**

7. Friday morning, I came down early at our house to put the coffee on. When I came down about 10 minutes later, I found out that I had turned on the coffee maker—and gotten everything right—except for putting the coffee pot **under** it. And I had a mess!

-As I reflected on that—I realized that, for a number of reasons, I was at the end of a very stressful week. I was starting to lose big pieces of the plane! It reminded me of when I came to a point about 6 or 7 years ago of feeling emotionally shattered. On the verge of burn-out. I was shaky, I was tired, I was afraid, I was overwhelmed—and I had this knot in my stomach that wouldn't go away.

- God met me there and showed me that He is greater than any obstacle in my path. Lori was there as my lifelong companion—and believed in me, shattered as I was. And many of you were there—and walked with me, maybe without even knowing it, through that time. And I am a **grateful** person! I came out of that experience with hope; that there really is a Good Shepherd--and I have **everything I need!** And I want to pass that hope on to you!

**Homework:**

- a. Choose to forgive someone—unload a grudge!
- b. Or: Connect with a friend—or take a friendship to a new level
- c. Or: Take ten minutes each morning—and write a list of things you are grateful for.