

BLOW YOUR GENTLE BREATH ON OUR HEARTS AND MINDS, HOLY SPIRIT

Hosea 6: 3, I Kings 19: 9-13 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Ernest Hemingway wrote a story about a father and his teenage son. You may have read this story, but when I think of the gentle breath and blowing God wants to do in our hearts and minds, this old story sometimes comes back to my mind. In the story, the relationship had become somewhat strained between a Dad and his teenage son. As often happens, the teenage son ran away from home. Not long afterward, his father began a journey in search of his rebellious son. Finally, the search led the father to Madrid, Spain. There, in a last desperate attempt to find his son, his father put an ad in the local newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, Meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon tomorrow. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." The next day, in front of the newspaper office, eight hundred young men named Paco showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness. They were all seeking the love of their father. As we come to this final message on where our minds dwell in 2012, we have examined God's wind and the ***pain*** He uses to change our minds. We have examined God's healing and the ***prescribed training*** He uses to change our minds. We have examined God's ***proof and His proving tests of pruning, popularity, and persecution*** that He uses to change our minds to dwell upon Him. Today we turn to examine **God's gentle breath** on our hearts and minds. As we move into this message, perhaps you are the Paco, the son or daughter in this last message that God is speaking to and saying, "Dear Son/Daughter, I love you. I died for you. I want to work in your life. I not only want to redeem you. I want to lead you to press in to know me more. I love you, your Heavenly Father."

We have been praying as leaders and pastors and people in our church that this weekend will bring revival to each of our lives. A theologian, author, professor, and preacher, J. I. Packer, one evening, preached on revival. He had a woman come up and challenge him on what she thought was the foolishness of preaching on revival. She said, "Why do you keep having revivals when it doesn't last?" He asked her a question, "Why do you keep taking baths?" I know why I do. I need a fresh chance to be clean again. I pray that each of you afford yourselves of this opportunity to be fresh and clean with God before we get back to share echoes with the church tonight. If you could see God's offer, it's as if He has drawn the clean bath water for us—just the right temperature, and He is calling us saying, "Jump into the water and let me cleanse you." God is a gentleman and He is blowing afresh today with His gentle breath, saying, "Come to Me." Will we all come or will we resist His loving call? What is God's final way to change our hearts and

minds as we listen to Him speaking to us? What final method does He often use after using pain, prescribed training, and proof through His proving tests?

GOD'S MOVEMENT WILL BRING PRESSURE, GENTLE PRESSURE TO KNOW HIM MORE.

If you don't want His pressure, He will remove His gentle pressure to go back to using pain, prescribed training, and proving tests. But if you want God's gentle pressure, He will change your heart and mind until you say with Hosea in chapter 6: 3, "So, let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth." If I told you this pressure was like a back rub, I would be going too far. I believe this pressure is rather, the compelling gentle breath of the Lord's voice upon us. And I promise you, God never has bad breath. What I want us to explore in today's message is how God seeks to use the gentle pressure of His gentle breath? I want us to learn how He wants to change our hearts and minds until He is our continual pursuit in life, our continual priority in life, and our continual purpose for living. When this happens, we will know where our minds will dwell in 2012. Let's discover these ways God moves in our lives to bring pressure, gentle pressure for us to know Him more.

God wants to be our continual pursuit in life. (1) God has sometimes been called the Hound of heaven. He is forever pursuing us. He is never content to only pursue us. He wants us to pursue Him. Turn with me to I Kings 19: 9-13. This is a story in Jewish children's minds that many of them know best of all. We read, "Then Elijah came there (to Mt. Horeb after a 40 day journey) to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him and God said to Elijah. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (Notice God's pursuit which is to be our model to pursue Him) And Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life to take it away." So God said, "Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of gentle blowing. And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God would not let Elijah escape from him. God was moving Elijah to pursue Him. What would it look like in our lives if we started to truly pursue God? In 1975 a child named Raymond Dunn, Jr., was born in New York State. The

Associated Press reported that at his birth, a skull fracture and oxygen deprivation caused severe retardation. As Raymond grew, the family discovered further impairments. His twisted body suffered up to twenty seizures per day. He was blind, mute, and immobile. He had severe allergies that limited him to only one food: a meat-based formula made by Gerber Foods. In 1985, Gerber stopped making the formula that Raymond lived on. Carol Dunn scoured the country to buy what stores had in stock, accumulating cases and cases, but in 1990 her supply ran out. In desperation, she appealed to Gerber for help. Without this particular food, Raymond would starve to death. The employees of the company listened. In an unprecedented action, volunteers donated hundreds of hours to bring out old equipment, set up production lines, obtained special approval from the USDA, and produced the formula--all for one special boy. In January 1995, Raymond Dunn, Jr., known as the Gerber Boy, died from his physical problems. But during his brief lifetime, Raymond's mother taught the world the value of pursuing God and others. Like the widow in Luke 18: 1-8, Carol Raymond never gave up. There is a 2nd way God moves in our lives to bring gentle pressure for us to know Him more.

God wants to be our continual priority in life. (2) I know the Lord was pleased with His prophet Hosea in Hosea 6: 3 as he cried out to his fellow Hebrew people saying, "So, let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth." This picture is the picture of uninterrupted pressing forward. Do you know the danger of not continually pursuing God and making Him our first priority? Let me tell you a true story. On the cold winter evening of December 29, 1972, Eastern Airlines aircraft number 310 rested quietly on the dimly lit jet parking area outside New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport's Terminal One. The plane, a new "Whisperliner," could transport 229 passengers. On Dec. 29, 1972, it carried 178, including the crew. This Flight 401 was bound from New York to Miami. As the plane was landing, the head stewardess said "Welcome to warm Miami." The flight crew noticed a light unlit that was supposed to prove the landing gear was down and in position. It wasn't lit. The plane flew in large looping circles while the crew tried to determine if the landing gear was actually down and locked or not. Just in case the landing gear wasn't down, the crew members began working with the light bulb. Maybe it was something simple like a blown light bulb. The bulb seemed stuck. They couldn't get it out to check it, so they all began pulling and prying at the instrument panel trying to get the 75 cent light bulb out of its socket. As they struggled with the light bulb, the pilots got momentarily preoccupied. No one noticed that the plane was losing altitude quickly. The plane simply flew right into the Everglades swamp! An experienced flight crew got pre-occupied with a 75 cent light bulb. The loss of first priority cost

the lives of over 100 people! It became the world's first crash of a jumbo jet, Eastern Air Lines Flight 401, on December 29, 1972. 98 passengers died horribly in the infectious swamp of the Everglades, and three died soon afterward in the hospital. All 101 are gone, but not forgotten. You may say, “That would never happen to me.” Back in the 1980’s, I had a young lady who often sat beside me on our way back from New York—a youth trip I won’t forget. She told me she was going to be a strong young woman of God and not sacrifice her morals. She is living for the Lord today. He forgave her. Yet, in a moment of losing her focus, she compromised her morals. She became pregnant out of wedlock in 1983.

Did you know that many believers lose the battle of priority, not over a momentary focus, but by a deliberate abandonment of the Lord. They testify that living for Jesus is a rough battle. The going gets tough and they, with open eyes, reject the pain, the prescribed training, the proving tests of pruning, popularity, and persecution. Their testimony to me has been, “I’m tired of the battle...I’m getting out of the battle.” On Paul’s first missionary journey to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, he told the believers, in Acts 14: 22, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” We love the old John Newton hymn, “Amazing Grace.” The 3rd verse captures this thought, “Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.” What keeps us from keeping God our first priority? Are we struggling with a \$.75 light bulb, and losing the battle for truth, morality, and purity, in our mind and in our body? God wants us to press on to know Him—by pursuing Him, keeping Him as our first priority, but there is a final way to press in to know God more with a renewed mind dwelling on the Lord.

God wants to be our continual purpose for living. (3) God wants us to be like farmers—totally dependent on Him for our crops. He wants us to be totally dependent on Him for our present and our future. Hasn’t it been wonderful to worship together at Snow Camp? Is it our continual purpose to live for Jesus? Do you believe God has put in my heart a desire for others to know the Lord—a desire to evangelize? You are right. He has. I purpose to witness continually. But which is more important, the desire to worship the Lord more or the desire to evangelize? It’s not so much a matter of importance as much as it is a matter of which pursuit must be my first purpose. The most important purpose for God’s church is not witnessing to the lost, important as it is. The most important issue for believers is—“How can we come to know the Lord more?” How can we, like Hosea 6: 3 know, and press on to know the Lord? Our purpose must be to worship the Lord. Worship then becomes the foundation of our witnessing. Pressing on to know the Lord is a combining of making God our continual pursuit, priority and purpose.

One of the greatest threats to a healthy marriage is when either the husband or the wife quit continually pursuing their spouse for whatever reason, when their spouse quits being their continual priority, and when their spouse is not their continual purpose. This awful truth is happening all over America. Marriages are ending in divorce. Many of us up here at Snow Camp are married couples, Pastor Will and Carm, Nathan and Jerrica, Robert and Cheryl, Leo and Brenda, Nate and Ellen, my wife Jinny and I are married, and soon Brock and Angela will be married. That's seven couples. I want you to know, the secret to our happy future is if we both as husbands and wives keep pursuing each other as our continual priority and purpose. One of us as a spouse could say to the other, "I don't want to hear from you. I don't want to be with you. I don't want to know what you are thinking. Do whatever you desire. You are on your own. I don't care about your heart and mind unless it's what I want to hear." That's a dangerous place to be with a spouse. It's an even more dangerous place to be with the Lord. Can you imagine saying, "Lord, I don't want to hear from You. I don't want to be with You. I don't want to know what You are thinking. Do whatever You desire. You are on Your own. I don't care about Your heart and mind unless it's something I want to hear." God forbid! We need to press on to know each other as married couples. All of us need to press on to know the Lord.

Hosea 6: 3 tells us that when God changes our hearts and minds to press on to know Him, He will blow His gentle breath on us, even as the risen Christ breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22) Elijah knew the gentle blowing of the Lord. Hosea 6: 3 speaks of the Lord's gentleness as the gentle going forth before us that is as certain as the dawn. No one can stop the sun's gentle rising in the eastern sky or God's gentle rising in our lives as we yield to Him. Hosea tells us the Lord's gentleness will come to us like the gentle rain, like a spring rain watering the earth. Never forget—you can trust God's gentleness.

Some people make the mistake of cleaning out their fish aquariums with harsh soaps. Two or three days later, their prize tropical fish start dying. In a similar way, we can be harsh, unbending, bitter and unforgiving. Sometimes in our zeal to clean up our own lives or the lives of others, we unfortunately use "killer soaps" – fits of temper, condemnation, criticism, and nagging. We may think we're doing right, but our harsh, self-righteous treatment is more than others can bear. Our uninformed efforts can destroy the very lives we are trying to protect. When God changes our minds, we can trust what He brings, pain, prescribed training, proving tests, and pressure, gentle pressure to know Him more. Are you prepared to trust the Lord to change your mind and heart to dwell upon Him? Jesus is ready when you and I are ready. Will you say yes to His moving in your life? Bow your heads!