

How Your Breath Releases God's Life

My three-ring notebook contained 14 songs, and I carried it with me last Friday and Saturday, to accompany vocalists for the high school district music festival.

Then at church on Saturday night, I had to laugh at myself. Fourteen times that weekend, I had heard adjudicators preach good breathing techniques to my students, so when we started singing praise songs, all I could think about was how to breathe while I sang.

1. Put your dominant foot slightly forward.
2. Roll your shoulders back until they fall relaxed, in line with your heels.
3. Hold your head tall.
4. Take a full breath in, using your large abdominal and back muscles, not your small, fragile throat muscles.
5. While you sing, control the release of air by using your abdominal muscles, as if breathing out through a coffee straw.

One of our praise songs talked about the breath of God, and I pictured the creation of Adam.

"Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7).

Breathing and life go together.

My husband is a licensed clinical professional counselor. Do you know what he does first thing when people (and not always just his wife) are anxious? He walks them through deep-breathing exercises.

What if God wants us to do with our spirits what he created our bodies to do?

As much as there is a physical art and discipline to breathing well for singing, there is a spiritual art and discipline to breathing well for living. Why do some followers of Christ have peace and joy and others don't? Breathing technique.

When I try to figure out a problem on my own or try to pull myself up in a difficult situation by myself, I quickly experience anxiety and a great weariness, the way a novice vocalist starts sucking air before getting to the end of a phrase. But when I pray and put all my weight on God's truths, I can endure hard things better and longer, because I have filled myself with life-giving oxygen.

One of the vocal adjudicators (a gifted fellow teacher from my school) said that throat tension (TENSION!) is a symptom of not getting a sufficient fill of oxygen by using the abdominal and back muscles.

We all breathe, but not everyone breathes well.

Try watching this video of Andrea Bocelli and Heather Headley. When they hold the huge notes for an impossibly long time at the end, ask yourself how they are able to sing with such strength for so long. Their voices go to the rafters.

Then imagine your life, your "voice" going to the rafters, filled with the truths of God and able to produce and sustain something beautiful for the world to hear. This is what God made you to do, but you have to get a good breath first.