

## Theme Summary and Session 1 : Exhale/Inhale – Back to Life

Thank you so much for being willing to come and teach as an important part of our Mission Adventures program. As you probably know, our program has special times set aside for training and teaching for our participants as an important part of their missions trip. Every year we have a different theme in order to try and emphasize the message we feel God has given us for the year. Each program director finds unique ways to reinforce this theme through the training sessions with the participants, and your teaching plays a key role in these times. These notes are designed for you in order to help you better communicate the theme for our program this year, “*Exhale/Inhale – Back to Life*”.

Every year, the Mission Adventures Network Theme Team meets together for several days of intercession, prayer, brainstorming and fun in order to seek God. The goal is to determine what He is saying to us for our participants in the coming year of Mission Adventures. This year’s theme verse came through loud and clear, and although there are several others that you will also receive, these are the main two scriptural references that God led us to:

**Titus 3:3-8a** – We used to be stupid, disobedient, and foolish, as well as slaves of all sorts of desires and pleasures. We were evil and jealous. Everyone hated us, and we hated everyone. God our Savior showed us how good and kind he is. He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us his Spirit. Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life. This message is certainly true.

**Ezekiel 37:1-14** – The story of the dry bones coming back to life.

This first session is often not very long, and as far as teaching is concerned, is primarily an introduction to the theme. It is also, however, the opportunity to set the tone and the layout for the rest of the week. It is our road map and our one chance at a first impression with these students. As we prayed over what exactly God wanted for this group of Mission Adventures students, He led us to these verses, pointing out that our students, most of whom will be teenagers, are so caught up in everything going on around them in the world that they miss the beautiful, life-giving things of God that are right in front of them. We want to use this first session to lay the groundwork for teaching them about that for the rest of the week. We want you to be able to relay to them how everything around them is pulling at them, vying for their attention, trying to get them to come to anything but God to fill their lives, trying to get these students to fulfill their desires through worldly things, things that the students don’t even realize are poisoning them, filling up their lungs with death. There is a tipping point, though, and it is that moment when the Holy Spirit breathes his life into us and fills every need that we’ve been seeking to fulfill through all the things of the world. From there, it is up to us to choose to **Exhale** the poison of the world and **Inhale** the Holy Spirit, the breath of life, the things of God, and to, through that, truly come **Back to Life**. By the end of the week, we want to send the students out with a desire to intentionally breathe in God and live life fully, in Him. This first session is how we will begin to set them on their way towards that. It is our chance to start talking about the ways the world distracts and poisons us without our even realizing it. This, especially, is the crux of the Titus verse, and where we would like to begin.

In addition to giving you background on the theme, here are a few suggestions as you prepare to share.

- Take some time to ask your program director about our Mission Adventures theology policy. We emphasize as much as we can the shared values and beliefs of all followers of Jesus, and try to stay away from the touchier theological topics that could prove distracting during such a short time with our participants.
- Take some time to find out a little about the group(s) you'll be speaking to. The director of the MA program you are speaking to will probably provide you with this information anyway, but it's always a good idea to try and find out the size and make-up of the group, including age range, denomination, and even any relevant history or spiritual maturity level that could be applicable. (For example, are they mostly new believers, or a newly formed group, or have they been together since kindergarten? How long has their leader been with them? Have there been any recent church or community upheavals?) It can also be helpful to consider the interaction between multiple groups should you be speaking to more than one church team or group at a time. All these things can be helpful in forming the way you choose to offer your presentation.
- Try and think of ways that you could involve the participants in the teaching other than just listening to you talk. Small group discussion, using multi-media, games or even simple tools like crayons, or cutting out pictures from magazines can be surprisingly thought provoking.
- Take some time to process how this theme impacts you personally. How does it reflect what you've gone through in your own journey, or what you're going through now? Often as staff, we're amazed each year how the theme is what WE need to hear, as much (or maybe more) as our participants do. We've found the most effective way to communicate our past themes has been letting God speak to us about them and impact us deeply before we ever even begin our program. Any time we start to think only in terms of "what do these kids need to hear?" without first asking God to search our own hearts, He seems to pull us back and causes us to be changed by the theme first. Isn't He good like that?
- Lastly, the notes are simply meant to be a guideline for you. While the more reinforcement we can give to our theme the better, we trust that you'll hear from God and present what He's saying to you for your particular group. In the past we've found it helpful to use what we call the four "p's" (Purity, Passion, Purpose, and Proclamation) as guideposts for working through the theme.

## **Session 2 : Exhale - Dead Man Lifestyle**

Exhaling is all about getting rid of the junk that is within. Or, as the Bible words it, “Get rid of the former way of life and clothe yourself with your new self.” (Eph 4:22-24)

This process is all about you receiving your new life in Christ and losing your old life. This all *actually* happened when Christ died on the Cross and rose from the dead. When Christ died, we died with Him and when Christ rose from the dead we rose with Him, a new creation. (Ro 6:3-11)

In (Ro 3:10-18) Paul talks about how God sees a person that does not have a relationship with Christ (The dead man’s life style) and this person is:

1. Completely under sin.
2. Neither good nor righteous.
3. Not understanding.
4. Not seeking God.
5. Turning away from God.
6. Worthless and unprofitable.
7. (Is 64:6) Failing at being good (Even our good deeds are not good).
8. Someone whose throat is an open grave.
9. Someone whose tongue practices deceit.
10. Someone whose tongue is poisonous.
  
11. Someone whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
  
12. Someone whose feet are swift to shed blood.
  
13. Someone who ruin and misery mark our ways.
  
14. Lacking in knowledge of the way of peace.
  
15. Missing the fear of God.

This depicts human nature. We are all in bondage. We are all drawn to sin and evil. This is man’s tragic situation and God’s response to this is, incredibly, redemption through Christ Jesus.

In (Phil 3:8-11) We see that Paul thought that his old life was like garbage to him, even though as a Pharisee he received a lot of praise from the people and he had tremendous status in society. Paul realized that he no longer needed to earn his way to God but that God had done it for him. (No longer my own righteousness, but one that comes through faith in Christ).

The Bible depicts the exhaling of our old life as through repentance. In Acts ch 2 we read about how Peter preaches to the crowd about Jesus and when he is done talking the people cried out to Peter and asked him what they were to do. Peter’s response to the people was that they

needed to repent and to get baptized. The word repentance means to change one's mind from past action; repentance means to turn 180 degrees. We were walking in sin and doing what we wanted to do, but now we desire to walk holy before God, doing what He wants us to do—we change.

Example of false repentance:

On 9/11 people started to go to church because of something bad that had happened, the people wanted God when they needed Him! (They treat God like medicine).

False repentance is to go to God only when you need Him and when life is hard, when life is good again you walk your own way again and forget about God.

Some other examples would be the rich young ruler in [Mt 19:16-22](#)

When you truly repent, you give your whole life!

Examples of true repentance:

Zacchaeus was a man that was willing to truly repent: His Repentance was followed up with his actions. [Lk 19:1-10](#)

Zacchaeus was willing to make restitution and He did not care how much it would cost him. All he wanted was Jesus.

The parable of the lost son is also an example of true repentance:

[Lk 15:11-32](#)

V18 He had a repentant heart.

V21 He tries to say everything he had thought about but he only gets to say half of it.

V22 The father can already see the repented heart.

V28-30 The other son is good on the outside but on the inside he has a dark heart.

V32 The heart of God the Father.

God will never turn down a repentant heart; the father did not come after the son but as soon as he truly repented in his heart, the father's arms were wide open and he wanted to restore his son to His full position in the family.

## **Session 3 : Resuscitation**

Webster's Dictionary lists one of the definitions of Resuscitation as: *to revive from apparent death or unconsciousness.*

In our world Zombies are a normal part of the current entertainment temperament. Movies, and TV shows galore, bring up ideas of resurrection, while casting an awfully hopeless light on it. However, the story of being revived from death is anything but hopeless. In Luke 7:14-15 Jesus brings the dead back to life, and no brains are munched. In Ezekiel 37:1-14 a whole army of the dead is raised. It's not an army of Walkers sent to destroy the living, but a promise to return to what God has given. From only dry bones they reanimate because the breath of Jehovah fills them with Life!

During this session we are reminded that Christ entered the story. He leapt in with both feet, exploding into our story, changing it forever. The scripture says (Psalms 18:16-19) "He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters". Like a lifeguard Christ pulled us from the brink, from the very maw of death itself, and like a drowning person we were saved not because of our ability to swim but: "He rescued me because he delighted in me." He did this because we were dead. We could not save ourselves, no matter how righteous we seemed to be. As the verse says in Titus, "He saved us because of his Mercy." Paul says in Romans "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God's love has him reaching through the great, unknown expanse and planting Christ amidst the narrative of our life, because of His mercy, because of His love, because *He* chose to save us.

What we have reached is the tipping point of our verse, the apex of the saga. God saves us, because of his mercy. He is pulling us from death, and breathing life into our corpses!

Verses: Psalms 18:16-19, John 3:3-5, Romans 5:8, Titus 3:4-5, Luke 7:14-15, Ezekiel 37:1-14

Reflect:

How have we tried to save ourselves?

Did we ever think "if I could only stop, (or start) \_\_\_\_\_ then maybe it would get better"

Meditate on:

Jesus saving us because of *His Mercy alone*

## **Session 4 : Inhale**

As our Theme Team debated the exact wording and order of our theme for this year, there was some discussion around which word we should place first, exhale or inhale. As we talked and prayed, God made it evident to us that exhale needed to come first for multiple reasons. Not only is this the order in which things happen in the verses from Titus, but it is the order in which things *must* happen in order for us to live more fully. We *need* to exhale the carbon dioxide, the poison of the world, from our bodies, in order to be able to inhale the full breath of God that gives us life. There are multiple scriptural references that speak of God's breathing life into us, and that talk about the Holy Spirit as the breath of life. God has a deep, passionate desire to bring us life in the fullest, to give us good gifts, to allow us to live in a way that is freer, healthier, and more complete. It is this inhaling of the Holy Spirit, of the very breath of God, which allows us to truly live.

It is from here that we have the opportunity to live out Colossians 3, the putting on the new self, or new man, but it also means we have to let go of the poisonous things of the world that we have exhaled. We can find the strength to do that through our new breath, but it needs to be a conscious choice, intentionally keeping in step with the Spirit like it says in Galatians 5.

Keeping in mind that these notes are just intended as a guideline for you, here are the pertinent scriptural references for this session (plus any others God puts on your heart):

Titus 3:3-8a (of course)

Colossians 3

Galatians 5: 16-26

2 Timothy 1:7

Acts 2

## Session 5 : Learning to Breathe

Breathing is key to life. At such a statement, you're probably thinking "duh, anyone who doesn't breathe dies," and you'd be right. There is a possibility, however, that you weren't fully aware of the layers of truth to that statement. Maybe, anyone who doesn't breathe *properly* doesn't fully live...

Okay, apart from sounding totally cheesy back there, there is truth to that statement. Think of Darth Vader; not only was he an imposing villain with a shiny black dome, he was memorable because of the Koooh Phaaaah... Khooooh Phaaaah....that emanated from his mask. The very essence of Vader can be wrapped up in his darkly hypnotic respirations. In both martial arts and meditation, breathing is key to being able to focus. In fact, for many teachers taking on new students, the first lesson is *learning to breathe* properly. (I know, I know knock off the puns and gimme something real).

Psalm 139:13-18 is a beautiful passage that reminds us about God knowing us intimately. In verse 18 the author says, "when I awake, I am still with you." The verse hearkens back to being centered. When we take time to breathe, we become aware of our body, the temperature of the air, the filling of our lungs. In the martial art of Aikido, breathing is an integral part of "centering" oneself, it helps the flow of "energy" or "ki." For us, as believers, we need to center ourselves on God, recognizing that *HE KNOWS US* intimately!

The important thing to remember about breathing is that it is both in *and out*. In 2 Kings 18:1-16 we meet the king Hezekiah, who smashes down the idols all around him. Breathing out God, to his country. Jesus also told us to breath out. In Matthew 28:16-20 he says: "go, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

We are new, filled with the Spirit and called to go, share that life giving breath with others!

Meditate on the scriptures mentioned. I'm sure God will give you even more to go on than I have.

## **Session Six - Back to Life**

This being the last evening it usually is a good time to give the kids the opportunity to make a commitment to God if not yet done.

In Genesis when God created humans he did not intend for us to ever die. We were meant to live forever. He created us perfect. After the fall (remember that little incident with the tree?) we were no longer perfect. Our bodies would die. Not only that, but we only use about 10% of our brains! When God created us we were 100% perfect!

So here we are, thousands of years later. Are we perfect? No! In Titus when Paul says we too were sinners; he is saying we are all sinners. None of us is perfect. Not preachers, not saints, not Paul, not me or you. That is why this week we have been focusing on exhaling and inhaling. Getting rid of the bad and taking in the good. Everyone breathes everyday but this doesn't mean you breathe well. It takes training to breathe well. Mountaineers must train to breath at high elevation. Runners train to not only strengthen their legs but also their lungs. Any physical activity will require stronger lungs. Runners, mountaineers and any athlete you ask will tell you that you must practice your breathing. It takes a conscience effort to think about your breathing in order to get better at it. The same goes for the life of a Christian. In doing this you will discover the true meaning of a Christian life. This is where the "back to life" phrase comes in. Think of it this way: a tree started out as a seed. That seed was dead, but in the right circumstances (soil and water) it came to life and grew into a tree. When a seed leaves a tree it dies. But if things go right it will come back to life and grow into a tree!

John 12:24 says: Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

As we practice this exhaling and inhaling in our lives we will come to a tipping point. What does it mean to be fully Christian? To put Jesus first? It means our life is second to Jesus. So this tipping point could be anything about ourselves or in the world that we put before Jesus Christ. What things might we put before Jesus? Sports, family, girlfriend, boyfriend, drugs, popularity, porn? Not all of those things are bad but they can certainly can get in the way of our commitment to Jesus. Remember Jesus was the only human who was perfect. He relates to us, understands us and he gave his life despite being perfect. He had every right to refuse to die but he did it willingly. What rights do you hold on to? What rights you think you deserve? Do those rights weigh more than Jesus in your life? We all need to exhale and inhale to truly know what is most important to us. (Colossians 3:1-17)

If you are already putting Jesus first in your life what does your life look like? Are you serving other people? Your community? Actively involved in a church? Do you have a heart for the poor? Are you being disciplined? Are you teaching others about this abundant life? As we practice exhaling and inhaling we will get better. Soon our exhaling will no longer be sin and bad stuff but because we have inhaled God and his word we will begin to live out the gospel and change the world.