# Breath of God: a Bible Study

## Introduction

We normally spend Pentecost thinking about the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples in the upper room. You might think about the preaching in tongues that converted two thousand people. Or maybe you are reflecting on the importance of waiting for God to act. You might even be pondering the link between Easter and Passover and how it tracks on to the link between Passover and Shavuot.

But in this Bible study we are going to focus on God’s breath. God’s breath granted life to creation, turned dust into people, gives blessings, and blew through the upper room at Pentecost. Throughout the Bible, the breath of God is used as an image for the Holy Spirit and for God’s blessings being poured out for us.

In this year’s Pentecost study, we will be looking at how we need to allow ourselves to receive the gift of God’s breath and to be filled with the life that comes from God alone.

## Bible Text: God Forms Man

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

### Questions

* Why do you think God’s breath is what gives life to the man?
* Do you think that it makes a difference to the story for God to form a human by breathing into dust, rather than just by creating from nothing?
* Can you think of a link between this story and the story of Pentecost?

## Bible Text: the Breath of the Almighty

‘The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.’ **(Job 33:4)**

### Questions

* Can you see a link between this and the verse from Genesis?
* Is there a difference between the kind of life that comes from the breath of God, and the life that comes from our own breathing?
* Do you think that there is a difference between our physical life and our spiritual life?

## Bible Text: Jesus Appears to His Disciples

‘On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”’ **(John 20:19-23)**

### Questions

* Do you think there might be a link between the peace of God and the breath of God? If yes, what is it?
* Can you think of any links between this story of the giving of the Holy Spirit and the story of Pentecost in Acts?
* If God creates humans by breathing into the dirt, what do you think we might learn about the Holy Spirit by focusing on Jesus breathing on the disciples?
* What do you think the significance might be for a Christian that the first thing Jesus tells his disciples after he breathes the Holy Spirit on to them is that God will forgive the sins of those people that they forgive?
* If we understand the breath of God as being to do with life, what does that suggest about the role of the Holy Spirit for us when he is breathed on to us by Jesus?
* How often do you think about breathing? Have you ever noticed that when you start thinking about your breathing, it is really difficult to stop again? What lesson do you think that might teach us about the Holy Spirit in our life?

## Bible Text: the Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.’ **(Acts 2:1-4)**

### Questions

* A wind can be powerful, and breath is what keeps us alive. Do you think there is a connection here to the way that the Holy Spirit works in our life?
* What do you think it might have felt like for the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit through the breath of God (as in John’s account)?
* What do you think it might have felt like for the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit through a violent wind (as in the Acts account)?
* Are you trying to get through life in your own strength, or are you trusting in God to give you life?

## A Pentecost Prayer

Father God, send the gift of your Spirit into our lives again this Pentecost. Fill us afresh with the life that comes only from you. As we seek to see people as you do, we ask that you forgive the sins of others as we learn to forgive them.

Lord Jesus Christ, by your suffering, death and resurrection you have shown us how to love our neighbour. Breathe the Holy Spirit into us once again. Fill us with the life that is lasting beyond the grave. Empower us to forgive others as you have forgiven us.

Holy Spirit, come and dwell in us. Fill us with life everlasting and the breath that endures. Give us the faith and the courage to forgive those who sin against us. Convict us of our own sins so that we may not sit in judgement over one another.

Almighty God, who breathed life into reality and who grants us eternity, fill us with your love today and every day, so we may better serve you.

Amen.