

Remember to Breathe

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I don't think about breathing very often. In fact, it is probably safe to say that I very rarely think about it. About the only time I give it any thought is when I am performing physical activity. When I am running, I have noticed that without even thinking about it, I time my breathing with my pace. When I first start running, I usually inhale for three steps and exhale for three. After about a quarter mile or so, I inhale for two steps and exhale for three. After about a mile, I am usually inhaling for two steps and exhaling for two. I usually keep this rhythm for the remainder of the run. For the most part, I do this without thinking.

Recently I was at Physical Therapy and the therapist had me performing a new exercise. As I was concentrating on the movements she wanted me to perform, she reminded me to breathe. That was the first time I noticed that I was holding my breath. As I began breathing in time with the exercise, the movements became smoother and easier to perform.

Breathing is the way our body takes in oxygen and other gases our bodies need to live, while at the same time expelling gases, such as carbon dioxide, that are harmful to us if they build up. Our bodies do this day and night without us ever thinking about it. It is part of the autonomic nervous system so that it works involuntarily, or without us having to think about doing it.

There is a spiritual equivalent to this process. It is called spiritual breathing. Unfortunately, it is something we have to train ourselves to do. But if we commit ourselves to it, it becomes almost second nature.

Spiritual breathing is done by mentally confessing our sins to God (exhaling) and accepting His forgiveness (inhaling) to give us the strength and endurance to live our lives in such a manner that it honors God. Just like physical breathing gives us physical endurance to run a given distance, spiritual breathing gives us the spiritual endurance to live a godly life. As we confess our sin, we exhale all of the bad acts and deeds which are spiritually detrimental to us. As we inhale God's forgiveness, we are renewed with the presence of the Holy Spirit whose presence empowers us to live and grow spiritually.

At first, spiritual breathing is a difficult thing to do, but the more we practice, the easier it becomes. It is just like any act. The more we do it, the more we make it a regular part of our lives. We are training ourselves to develop a good spiritual habit. We train ourselves to breathe when we exercise and we must also train ourselves to spiritually breathe as we exercise our spiritual life. When we run, we start off singing cadence. This generally controls the rate at which we inhale and exhale to train our bodies to measure our breathing for maximum endurance. It is also necessary to develop exercises through the day to remind us to practice spiritual breathing.

The next time you go to exercise, try to focus, not on your physical breathing, but on confessing your sin to God and inhaling His forgiveness. In this way, you can strengthen yourself spiritually and physically, all at the same time.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.