

Expire to Inspire
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In his devotional book, *The Indwelling Life of Christ*, Major W. Ian Thomas shares of a profoundly life changing experience when he went to a voice trainer. When he entered her studio, she unexpectedly commanded, “Expire!” Both the force of the command and the command itself confused Thomas. Was she asking him to die? He was too young for that! No, she wanted him to exhale... empty his lungs of all his air. So she demonstrated for him and he feebly followed suit. Then she commanded again, “Inspire!” And so, he inhaled. She jumped on him for his poor attempts to exhale and inhale and proceeded to show him how to inhale. Thomas describes her inhaling like the power of a massive vacuum that seemed to even pull the grand piano from across the room.

She concluded for Thomas, “You will never, ever learn to inspire until first you have learned to expire; otherwise, you will only perspire?” Light bulbs went off for Major Ian Thomas with this exclamation. All of a sudden, this wasn’t just a breathing exercise for him, this was a profound truth about life.

Consider the paradoxical word of Jesus to his disciples,

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” - Matthew 16:24–25

We must all come to grips with the seductive self-deception of, “I’ve got this.”

If we want to be alive, to truly live in this broken world, it’s not going to be by our own strength or power or wisdom or resilience or goodness. If we are to learn how to “inspire” we must first “expire.” We must release our last breath by dying to ourselves... to living for ourselves, to self-sufficiency, to self-centeredness.

“Until you have first learned to expire, you will only perspire.” Too often we are going through life, marriage, relationships, work, etc. and we are just spinning our wheels striving in our efforts and our own strength. We are beat down and burnt out by a lack of results or repeated failures. Or we are bitter from perpetual disappointment. Maybe you’re not burnt out or bitter, but beware of the seductive seeds of self-sufficiency planted by success, “you’ve got this.”

Once we come to our senses and express our last breath in surrender to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, only then can God breath His life of the Spirit into us. Once we die with Jesus, then we will be resurrected with Him and truly live. Consider the Apostle Paul’s testimony,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” - Galatians 2:20

As Paul reveals, this isn't a one-time experience, but an ongoing practice, a way of life. Christ wants to live His life through you, He wants to put His power in you. This is a daily practice of dying to ourselves in order to live in the power of Christ. This is just as essential as breathing for the Christian. In fact, this IS breathing for the Christian.

Consider this inspiring daily prayer from Major Ian Thomas:

“With every step you take, you first expire: ‘Lord Jesus, I can’t; You never said I could.’ Then you inspire: ‘Lord Jesus, You can, and always said You would!’”

This article was inspired by Major W. Ian Thomas’ devotion, “Expire to Inspire”, written in His book *The Indwelling Life of Christ: All of Him in All of Me*. (2006, Multnomah Books)