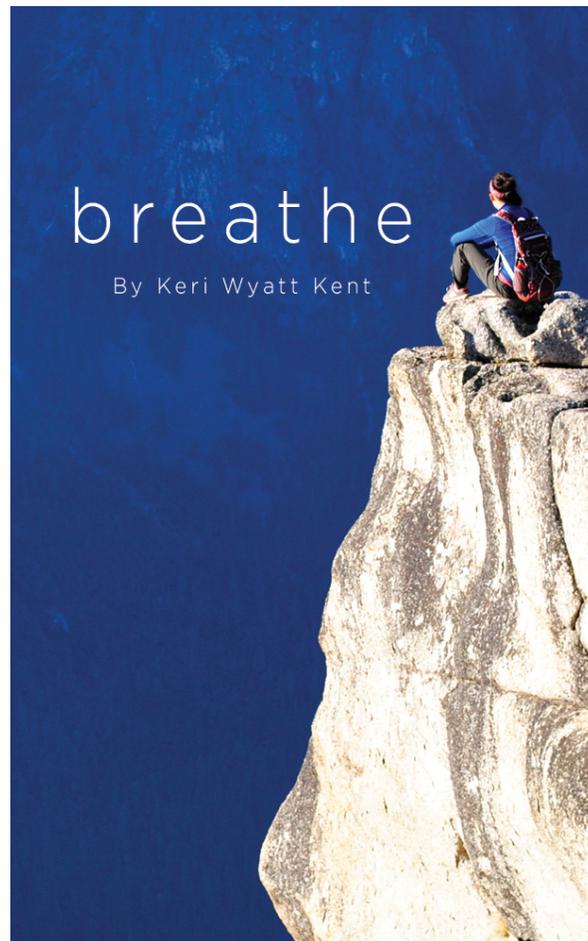


Breathe Study Guide



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

(Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to slow down: To make choices that move you toward Sabbath Simplicity: a sanely paced, God-focused life. To learn how and when to say these life-saving words:

No.

Enough.

Stop.

Another best thing: gathering with a group of like minded friends who want to support you in your choices to live just a little bit counter-culturally, who want to walk with you on a journey toward Sabbath Simplicity.

You can use this guide on your own. Or, gather a group of friends. Each week, read one chapter of *Breathe* by Keri Wyatt Kent. (On amazon at <https://amzn.to/3FVAKW8>) If you don't have time to read a book on slowing down, that's something to pay attention to. However, each chapter is divided into sections so that you can read a bit at a time. Don't try to read more than one chapter per week.

The book contains "Breathing Exercises" throughout each chapter. Try these! When you meet, spend a few minutes asking people to share how those exercises went, what they learned or thought about. Many readers have found it helpful to keep a Breathe journal (you can find one on amazon as well) to write out responses to the Breathing Exercises or questions that come up for them during their reading.

We'd love to hear from you, so visit www.keriywattkent.com If you'd like free bookplates, signed by Keri, just stop by the website and hit "contact" to leave a message.

Meeting guidelines—if you're reading with a group

First, friends, know that you have freedom. This guide can be used on your own or with a group. If you're gathering for discussion, make sure your group is a place of safety and confidentiality. You have freedom to build your own structure, or use the following as a guide.

At each meeting, I'd suggest that you have one person open up your time with prayer. Or if you'd prefer, just begin with a minute or so of silence, where you stop to just breathe deeply for a moment.

Then, warm up the discussion by starting with this simple question: ***where did you notice God since we last met?***

Knowing you have to answer this question each week will gently remind you to be looking for those God moments that perhaps you might have rushed past before. It will help you to pay attention, which is the first step toward Sabbath Simplicity. You might share something you read, something your child said, some experience in which you were aware of God's presence.

This study is designed not just to teach you about slowing, simplicity, and Sabbath, but to guide you into living out these practices. Even if you have kids, a job, a spouse, and other stresses—you can simplify your life and focus on what really matters. In fact, it is in the seasons of life that we are caring for others that we need to make sure we care for ourselves, to sustain our spiritual strength. This book, and hopefully your group, will help you to do that.

After your initial discussion, use the questions below to discuss each chapter. You don't have to get through all the questions, and you don't need to have everyone answer every question. Allow people the freedom to not answer if they don't want to. The questions are purposely open-ended. There are no right or wrong answers—there are simply opportunities to share your opinions and experiences.

Chapter One: Hurried and Worried

What is your response to the story of Jane in this chapter? Do you know anyone like her (perhaps yourself)?

How would you describe the pace of your life?

- A. Extremely hurried and hectic
- B. Quite busy and hurried
- C. Busy occasionally but not constantly
- D. Steady and sane
- E. Slow and even boring at times

Do you exhibit any symptoms of the Hurried Woman Syndrome (fatigue, depression, weight gain, decreased libido)? How have these symptoms impacted your ability to get things done? How have they impacted your relationships?

How often do you feel that you don't have enough time during the day, that you cannot get things done?

- A. Numerous times each day
- B. At least once a day
- C. A couple of times a week
- D. Rarely

How much margin is there in your life? What is one thing you could do to create more margin? How strong is your desire to do so?

Chapter Two: Out of Breath

When you were growing up, were you a “hurried child”? How much time did you have to just be alone? To daydream? To play without a structured agenda?

How did your pace of life as a child shape you? How do you think it has impacted decisions you make as a parent?

What was surprising or helpful about Christine’s story? What parts of it could you relate to?

Are your kids in sports or other activities? What limits, if any, have you placed on their involvement in extra curricular activities?

In this chapter, we read: “there is a way to prune your schedule and way to approach the remaining things that will allow you to connect deeply with God, which in turn will allow you to breathe.” What was your initial response to this statement? What can you prune from your schedule?

One of the Breathing Exercises in this chapter directed you to pray by simply being quiet and experiencing God’s presence. Talk about how this exercise went, and what it stirred in your soul.

Chapter Three: Scattered

“Like many of us, Laura had trouble saying no.” Could you relate to Laura’s story? What type of requests do you find it hardest to say no to?

What do you think it means to simplify your life? What steps have you taken to do that, if any? What’s one step you’d like to take?

Has the pace of your life ever caused you or a loved one to have physical symptoms, like it did for Laura’s husband? Explain.

Read James 4:7-8 from your bible or in the chapter. What does it mean to be “double minded”?

We live in a world where we constantly hear of conflict, trouble, or pain. How can we obey God’s command to “fear not”?

How does fear make us hurry?

Chapter Four: Simplified

How is simplifying different from organizing? Why does our culture tend to equate the two?

What is your response to Jean's story?

What would it look like to "pay attention to your soul"?

What is one step you could take to simplify your life?

What gets in the way of focusing on Jesus, and seeking him first?
On a scale of 1 to 10, how content are you? Explain.

Do you have enough? Have you ever stopped to think about how much "enough" is? How might doing so impact your contentment level?

Chapter Five: Mindful

How many times a day do you say, "Hurry up!" to your children, spouse, friends, or co-workers? What would happen to your relationships if you did not tell others to hurry?

What do you think it means to live mindfully? What keeps you from doing so?

Where are you, spiritually speaking? Where do you want to go?

What does it mean to "pay attention" as you go through life?

This chapter devotes several pages to the topic of family meals. How important is it to you to gather with your family for an evening meal? How often each week do you do that? What gets in the way of family meals?

How would gathering your family around the table for a meal each week (if it's not already a practice) impact you spiritually?

Chapter Six: Humble

What is your response to Elise's story?

Our culture tends to equate busyness with importance, and a high-powered career with a person's value. How do these cultural values hinder our ability to choose humility?

How do choices of external things like the car you drive or the home you live in impact your ability to live simply? How do these external choices impact your heart and soul?

How do you typically deal with interruptions to your day?

In the chapter, we read, "obedience and humility are two sides of the same coin." What do you think that means? Do you agree? Explain?

What do you need to say "no" to right now, in order to nurture your soul?

Chapter Seven: Rested

What questions or insights came from reading Patti's story in this chapter? Where did you find yourself saying, "I could never do that"? Where did you find yourself saying "I want that!"?

Note: We often default to the words "I could never do that" when we feel envy or fear. The truth is, you could do that (whatever that is) but you'd have to take a risk, make a change, even sacrifice something. But the rewards of those risks might be worth it. Don't let your thoughts defeat you. Instead of saying never, say, "I could do that if..." and then think about what you could do instead of what you could never do.

What were Sundays like for you as a child? Did your family rest one day a week? If so, did they call it Sabbath or was it not directly stated? How do these patterns and memories impact your current practice?

In this chapter, we read that Sabbath Simplicity begins with listening to God's direction, and making changes gradually. What do you sense God is leading you to do when it comes to Sabbath?

Does your life have a daily and weekly rhythm, or does it feel random? What can you do to incorporate rhythms, or to pay more attention to them?

How can you make Sabbath a day to love the people you do life with?

What is one thing you'd like to be free from for one day a week (perhaps laundry, shopping, computer)? Try simply not doing that one thing on Sunday, and report how that goes to the group next time you meet.

Chapter Eight: Sheltered

In this chapter, we read: “From a practical standpoint, you have to decide what your Sabbath will look like. What activities would you like to refrain from? Also, just as important, what do you want to include? What is restful?”

What ideas did these questions evoke? What, if anything, surprised you about the idea of deciding what Sabbath will look like?

What is your response to the author’s story of a snowy Sabbath afternoon at home? What commitments have you made (things you’ve said “yes” to) that might keep you from having a day like this? What choices would you need to make in order to have a quiet day at home?

How do you think slowing the pace of just one day in your week would impact the overall pace of your life the rest of the week? What are one or two things you could do to make Sunday a slower day?

What brings you joy? What do you think that question has to listening to God, particularly about your Sabbath practice?

Chapter Nine: Slow

In this chapter, one of the Breathing Exercises asks you to draw a tree representing your obligations and responsibilities. Take some time during your meeting to let each person show their drawing, and talk about what they learned from doing the exercise. (This may take all of your meeting time, which is fine.)

If you have time, here are some optional additional questions. Only use these if you've got extra time after letting people talk about and share their drawings.

If you work outside the home, the examples and stories in this chapter may stir some frustrations for you. Talk about that.

Whether you work outside the home, or are at home full-time, creating space is challenging. What causes you to feel hurried?

Have you ever to notice and then slow down your thinking, as the chapter suggested? What happened? What do you think it means to live in the moment?

What do you sense God wants to prune from your life?

Chapter Ten: Focused

Do you live in a “culture of going fast”? How is the message of hurry communicated? What sort of things do you hear or see that make you feel hurried?

Each time we say yes to something, we are saying no to something else. What motivates us to say yes when we’d rather say no? How do you decide which things to say yes to?

In this chapter, we read, “Do your kids know how to make decisions based on the fact that they are part of a family a community, a world?” How would you respond to that question? What are some ways you are helping your children to realize they are not the center of the universe?

What is your response to the section in this chapter that talked about setting limits for your children? In which specific areas do you find it most challenging to set limits? How do limits express love?

What would it look like for you to take time to play? What questions or longings arise when you think about playing?

Note: Please share your feedback about this study with us by leaving a comment on Keri’s blog at www.keriyattkent.com