

# WHEN GOD BREATHES + + +

PASTOR GREG GRIFFITH

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Good morning, church. Hey, let's just take a moment. I know he's not in a room, but I just want to say how grateful we are and the impact that he's made, and we'll celebrate over the next couple weeks. But thank you so much to Roger Tymer and his wife Cheryl. He was telling me today he's looking forward to the feeling of getting up each day and not having to go to work. And so he's like, I don't know what that will feel like. And I said, well, I hear it sounds great, so we'll find out.

Hey, I got a question for you. How do you respond when things go wrong about the things you love? I can say I'm pretty much cool as a cucumber in the midst of crisis. I rarely find myself like having anxiety or I'm passing on anxiety. I usually have a non-anxious presence, but I've discovered with the exception of a few things. And this really began where our daughter, our oldest daughter, was probably two or three, and I'm not really sure what she was doing, but all of a sudden she got hurt really bad, and it knocked the breath out of her, and she passed out. And at that moment, even though I usually am cool and kind of collected, I lost it, and I went from cool as a cucumber to as chaotic as a coconut.

And I just, you know, I was like running around, like call 911. Where's the phone? What to do? And Lori, like my wife, she just said to me, she goes, whoa, Greg, you got to like take a breath, like take a beat. Maybe go to another room. I'll take care of this, right? And I thought, well, maybe that's a one-off.

And then just a couple years ago, our youngest daughter, who has fallen down the stairs a couple times, but this time she fell down, and she hit her back, and it totally took her breath away, and she passed out. And again, I went to chaotic as a coconut, and was kind of right there, and she kind of comes to, and like she had been shaking and doing a little stuff. And I have a WebMD degree, but this day the internet was out when this part went, so I missed that. And apparently, like I was like, I think you had a seizure, and then we found out it had nothing to do with the seizure. It's just a body's natural response. I'm not sure what it's called.

But again, I lost it, and I realized with people that I love, when I'm out of control, and there's no ability for me to fix whatever's happening, I lose it, and I don't have a calm demeanor or a calm response. And in today's event, we're going to read about a woman who has a son who lost his breath, literally. He died. And we're going to see her response, and we're going to hear about her response, and some of it will be prescriptive, so this is how we respond to things as Christians. Some of this is descriptive, where it's just describing what's going on in the event, and we take that, and we'll kind of walk through that a little bit together as well.

My goal, though, today is that as we discover this, we're going to see a couple things. In the midst of where we're out of control, God does give to us the ability to see His presence and trust Him through a prophet, a prayer, and a resurrection in this event. And the prophet's going to lead us that our faith holds fast in the midst of our hurts, that the prayer returns us to the hope from our source, and the resurrection provides a revival in the midst of our flatline. And so we're going to dive in of all those things.

So through a prophet, and one of the things I'd invite you to think about as you think about this is what have you had in life that you've really prepared for, wished for, desired? What is it that you've wanted? Is it that you wanted to get married, and the marriage didn't happen? Is it that you want children, and you haven't been able to have children? Is it the dream job that you keep applying for and applying for, and it doesn't happen? Is it something that's been taken away from you suddenly? The loss of a parent, the loss of a child, the loss of a spouse. Is it a dream or a desire that you thought was going to be one way, and it just didn't turn out?

And what happens when these things happen to us, where we have a desire and a dream, I call them the death of our dream, they flatline upon us. And today, we're going to see that faith holds even when it hurts, whatever that pain may be. And I want to invite you to remember, whatever pain someone's going through, there's no comparison to our pain. Your pain is real, your hurt matters, and it's not insignificant compared to someone else's. It's yours.

So what do we do when life flatlines, when we've had a loss? Well, let's go into the Scriptures, and I've been inviting you over this series to bring your Bible or have your Bible app ready, and we're going to open up to 2 Kings 4. And as we get to 2 Kings 4, 18 through 21, before we jump into that part, we have to look at the part ahead of that. And there's a Shunammite woman who has wanted a child. Her husband's of advanced age, she can't have a child. And she's talking to Elisha because she's helped him and helped the people of Israel, and he basically says, he says, what is it that you desire? And he learns that she wants a child, and he says, it will be. You will have a child.

Now, imagine this, like, she's wanting a child, she thinks that dream is dead, and she receives it. Candidly, I can understand this, because as an adopted child, an only child from parents that couldn't have children, like, my parents doted on me, they loved me. My wife reminds me of this, is like, I'm the guy that had ponies, and there's an eight and a half by ten foot picture above our mantle growing up of just me, right? And so, I didn't think it was weird at all. Right, so this doting, so this woman has this child, and here's what happens.

When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, oh, my head, my head. And his father said to his servants, carry him to the mother. And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died.

She went up and shut the door behind him and went out. A couple things happen here, right? And so, when we look at this Scripture, I mean, we heard it. Like, how terrible, this woman, her son is now dead. And her response is really interesting. Notice what she does. She doesn't prepare a funeral. She prepares to return with the boy to the man of God. She wants to come back to the prophet who had promised that she would have this child. And so, she doesn't look at it and say, my dream is dead. Instead, she says, the one who gave me, the one who spoke on behalf of his Lord, is the one who can fix this.

And I think this is the first spot for us to figuratively look at. I want to invite you and I, when life flatlines, don't prepare a funeral. Instead, faith holds even when it hurts. Look to the God that you and I know, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be there with us. And I think it's an important piece. Speak the truth that death will not define you, whatever it may be. It's not going to be your determined outcome. Stay faithful through your pain, trusting in the future where God already is.

I saw this in a friend of mine growing up. His mother one day came home and said, I'm done. I'm done being a mom. I'm done being married to your dad. And she left. And she ended up moving to a different state, far away. And she ended up living with someone else and starting a new life. My friend's dad never took his wedding ring off. And when he talked to his friends, he talked about his wife. And he always spoke about how they would be together because God had joined them together from day one. And he never gave out hope.

He invited friends and people to pray for him and for her. And two and a half years later, she came home. They reconciled. And today they've been married over 30 years. Now this may not be your story. This is his story. But what we see is, how are we speaking about the things that have flatlined in our life? And here's an opportunity for us, like this woman, which is to say, my son needs help.

She's entrusted to the prophet, who she holds fast to her faith, even when it hurts. And I think for you and me, this is a reminder for us, how are we working through the prophet? And when we talk about a prophet, there are prophets amongst us right now. Prophets are those who always point us back to holding fast to our faith and point us forward to holding fast to our faith. And so you and I have that amongst us.

I want to tell you what I do. I have a group of men who are my intercessors here at King of Kings. And every six to eight weeks, we get together and we pray for one another. They're ones that I give my deepest and most difficult things, the things in my life that are flatlining. And I ask them to speak into my life, to pray into my life, and to guide me and help me to hold fast to faith.

I also have a group that I text. And this text group is a text group that we talk about how we can pray for one another and care for one another at times. But then I have a group of two other people that every single day, we text one another. And it's this. We say what is best from the day before, what was worst from the day before, and how we can pray for one another right now. And sometimes that text just leads us to a pray emoji. Sometimes those texts leads us to a phone call.

These are the prophets that I use. And I want to invite you, if you have those that are there for you, that are like Elisha, that are like mine, I want you to thank them this week. Because they are important to your faith journey. If you're saying I don't have those, I want you to invite someone to be that for you. And here's how you simply do it. Say to them, will you please become one of my prayer partners? If I need anything, can I just reach out to you via text and ask you to pray with me and pray over me?

You see, what happens is when we do that is we have a prophet who helps us hold fast to our faith. And then we see what we live out through prayer. And prayer always returns us to the source, returns us to the hope that we have.

You see CPR is not a wish for life, it's an action of life. It's where we press down, we lean in, and we pray. And this is where our hope goes back to its source.

I want to tell you about the very worst funeral I've ever had. And I've had hundreds and hundreds of funerals because of the churches that I've been at. But this funeral is like it happened yesterday. I was at this funeral home in Michigan, and it was about seven minutes prior to the funeral. And I was right

about to get ready. At five minutes, I usually take the family to a different room, we pray together, read some scripture, and I just get them ready to start.

And it was about seven minutes in, and this woman was sitting in the second row, first seat right there. And all of a sudden, she falls to the floor. Now I'm cool as a cucumber because she's not my daughter or my wife. And so I realized quickly that she's not breathing. She didn't fall out of her chair. She is unconscious.

And so I look at the funeral director and I say, I need you to call 911 right now. And then I say to the room, is anyone in the room an EMT or a doctor? We need someone to perform CPR. And right away, two people come up and start performing CPR on this woman.

And then I'm sitting there with the organist, who is a good friend of mine, and the funeral director. And after the paramedics take her away and take her to the hospital, they look at me and they go, what do we do now? And I said, well, now we have the funeral and it's going to be a little different. But at the end of the day, we're going to remind everyone that this is about Jesus. And we bring everyone back to the source of life of Jesus in the midst.

Because we know that faith doesn't fear, it moves. And our faith is always moving back to Jesus and forward with Jesus and around Jesus. And so no matter what happens, we're looking back to Jesus. He is the hope and the source that we're always returning to, going to, and around. And that's what our Shenanmite is doing.

Here are the words from verses 22 through 30. She called out to her husband and said, send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again. And can you imagine having your child die in your lap and even uttering those words ever again, let alone in the midst of it? All is well.

She saddled the donkey and said to her servants, urge the animals on. Don't slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. So she set out, came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehiza, his servant, look, there's a Shenanmite. Run at once to meet her and say to her, is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child? And she answered, all is well.

And when she came to the mountain of the man of God, she caught hold of his feet and Gehiza came and pushed her away. But the man of God said, leave her alone. She is in bitter distress and the Lord has hidden it from me and hasn't told me.

Then he said, did I ask the Lord? Then she said, did I ask my Lord for a son? Did I not say, do not deceive me? He said to Gehiza, tie up your garment and take your staff in your hand, my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, don't greet them. And if anyone greets you, don't reply. Lay my staff on the face of the child.

Then the mother of the child said, as the Lord lives and as you yourself live. So he arose and followed her.

Notice what she does. She runs to the prophet to lay her request before him. She speaks words of desire. Is everyone okay? All is well, even though it doesn't look well at all.

She catches hold of his feet. She won't let go. She's committed to hold on and to trust. And she commits to be with him. I will not leave you, she says. Words of faith that where you go, I will go.

Don't let despair when our life flatlines, when things don't go the way we want. Don't let despair make you immobile. And this is what so often happens. When we lose the things that we desire, when we lose something that is so deep within us that it actually hurts that we've lost it. Whether it be a job, whether it be our marriage, whether it be our parenting, whether it be a loved one, whatever it may be, a relationship, it makes us immobile.

Don't let that despair make you immobile. Instead, commit, pursue, and run to God.

You see, when we pray and bring our dead places to God, it doesn't look normal. It may even feel strange, but it's always powerful.

This came alive for me recently. I had a relationship that was lost. It was gone. It was dead. It had been a relationship that had meant a great deal to me and our family. And as I had been just thinking and praying about this relationship for a long time, I knew that there were some things, because any time there is a conflict that it's not one-sided, I knew there were some things that I did.

And I can't control the things of the other person, but I can control myself. And I kept thinking, Greg, you've got to go back and you've got to apologize for your part. And so I reached out and just said, I want to apologize for the times I didn't honor you, for the ways that I didn't love you, care for you, for the impatience that I exhibited. Please forgive me.

And then I thanked them for the relationship we had had and the things that they had poured into my life and what they had done and the value I saw with them. And they responded back saying, I was surprised to get this voicemail and I forgive you.

And a short while later, they had a tragic event happen in their life and it opened a door for me to reach out and just say, I care and I love you and I'm praying for you.

You see, when we are people who run and who speak what we desire in trust of the Lord and who catch and hold on and commit to follow God, it always through a prayer returns us to the source of Jesus and gives us the ability to see Jesus in everything and everyone.

And then that leads us to look and to say in the midst of the things flatline, how do we work through a resurrection? Because that's what happens.

Where is the resurrection that brings a revival in our flatline that restores and brings life back happening? And here's what I want to invite you. Have you considered praying about something that's been long gone? Have you prayed about that relationship? Have you prayed about forgiving someone that maybe has died? But it's still each you? Have you prayed about the loss of a dream or vision that you've always wanted, but has never come to fruition? Have you prayed about maybe it's not a physical reconciliation of a marriage, but maybe it's a softening of your heart or their heart?

You see, revival can look strange, but it's always going to look real because that's what our God does.

Second Kings 4, 31-37, Gohiza went out and laid on the staff of the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. And he returned to meet him and he told him the child hasn't waken. So when Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on the bed.

So he went in and he shut the door behind the two of them and he prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and he laid on the child and he put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself upon him.

The flesh of the child became warm and then he got up again, walked around, walked once back and forth in the house and went up and stretched himself on him. The child sneezed seven times.

And then he summoned Gohiza and said, call the Shunammite. So he called her and when she came to him, he said, pick up your son.

She came, fell at his feet, bowing to the ground, picked up her son and went out.

A couple of things have happened here. First of all, again, we see in the midst of this, God is the God who brings breath back into life. And don't forget our God brings breath to us. It's how he created us.

The Ruach, the spirit of God goes into us and it revives us. And know this too, our God is not a God of resuscitation. He is a God of resurrection. And so he is looking to raise us from the dead.

And this is what I love about Baptism Sundays, is it's a reminder to us that our God has raised us up from the dead and united us with Christ in a death like his and a resurrection like his. And so whether it's a first time baptism or renewal of baptism, we see our God bringing and breathing Ruach into us and into his life.

So God revives and he can revive whatever you bring him, revive what you have.

Now look in this scripture here and we see quite a few things. First of all, this is the descriptives part, right? So please hear me when I say this, when and if you're with someone who loses consciousness and needs CPR, don't stretch out on them and say, this is biblical, call 911 and do CPR.

But notice this, right? A couple of things. First he stretches out on him. I couldn't help but think of a couple of scriptural passages.

The first one I thought of was Paul in Acts 20, when he was preaching so long that a boy fell out the window and died. But there's a spot there where Paul goes down to revive the boy who's dead. And the way he does it, he stretches out over him.

I think Paul would have thought of this and said, this is the way that the men of God do this. And so it would have been natural. He would have known already what to do as a rabbi who knew the scripture so well.

But more importantly, I want you to think about this in the terms of Christians. He stretched out over them to bring him resurrection life. Our God, Jesus, was stretched out over you and over me.

And he stretched out over us to bring resurrection, connection to the cross and connection to the empty tomb.

Our God has met you and placed his eye on your eye, his mouth on your mouth and his hand on your hand. And he, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, has breathed new life in you.

So what I need to do when the things that I can't control, when my dreams, my desires, those who I love the most, flatline. I need to remember for me that I also need CPR. I need to commit to the resurrection. To know that with Jesus, all is well, even when it looks like it's dead.

I need to pursue the spirit of God through prayer and return to the source of my hope that Jesus is there and run to the future, not afraid of what it will be, but confident that he is already there, that my God is ahead of where I'm going and has already laid out great plans for me.

So I want to ask you today, I want you to think about what in your life feels dead. What is flatlined? A dream, whatever it may be, what feels dead that God wants to breathe Ruach back into you again. He wants to revive it, resurrect it.

And second, I want to invite you this week to praise Jesus because his resurrection is a certainty that all things will be made new and that you too can always say, all is well. All is well.

I want to invite you to stand for prayer and I want to, I want you to hear the word of God from Isaiah 42.5. It says this, thus says the Lord our God who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath, Ruach to the people on it and the spirit to those who walk in it.

Father God, we thank you and praise you that you have performed CPR on us, that you've committed us to the resurrection, that we pursue the spirit of God and we run towards the future of the new heaven and the new earth.

That God, even in our life on this earth, when things flatline from dreams to visions to friends and family, we can speak words all as well.

Because you've given us a prophet to hold fast in our faith, even when it hurts. You've shown us prayer that returns us to the source of hope and you've given us a resurrection that revives us to live each and every day, sharing with the world all as well.

And all of God's people said, amen and amen.