

PART 1: Ex-Squeeze Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Our lives are busy and fast-paced. Lack of margin increases our stress and shortens our tempers. It can distract us from the most important things in our lives, and our relationships suffer. It can even affect our relationship with God because there's a connection between our willingness to create margin and our faith.

Life is better with breathing room.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about one of your favorite memories from the year that just ended.
2. Do you prefer a clutter-free life or do you tend to gravitate toward messiness? How does that preference affect your daily life?
3. As you look back on last year, how much breathing room did you have in your schedule? In your relationships? In your finances?
4. During the message, Andy said, *"Your happiness can be measured by the quality of your relationships, not your prosperity or your progress."* Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Read Matthew 6:31-34. Why is it so challenging to live out what Jesus commands in this verse?
6. Where do you need some breathing room in your life? What is one thing you can do this week to begin to create it? What can this group do to support you?

MOVING FORWARD

No matter what you do, you're going to live within limits—the limits culture drives you to, the limits fear places on you, or the limits your heavenly Father will lead you to. What's at stake isn't your progress. It's your peace.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matthew 6:31-34

INTRODUCTION

We're all busy. Our schedules are packed with career, family, friends, church, and other responsibilities. Sometimes our days are so full that we don't enjoy *anything* because we're trying to do *everything*. Our relationships benefit when we create breathing room in our schedules. But where do we start?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about one of the happiest times in your life. What was your schedule like during that period?
2. Think about how you managed your time last year. What would you like to do differently this year?
3. Read Psalm 90:10-12. Do you tend to think of your days as endless? Why is it difficult for us to number our days?
4. Do you currently or have you ever kept a Sabbath day? If so, what were the benefits? If not, what is challenging about the idea of taking a day off from your responsibilities and obligations?
5. What is one thing you need to add to your schedule? What is one thing you need to subtract?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to begin to create breathing room in your schedule? What can this group do to support you?

MOVING FORWARD

Whether it's work, family, or other obligations, something is going to control your time. Why not give control to the One who gave it to you? Creating breathing room in your schedule begins when you recognize that time is limited and, therefore, valuable. Use your time wisely.

Begin by saying this prayer, *"Teach me to number my days that I may gain a heart of wisdom."*

CHANGING YOUR MIND

*Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*

Psalm 90:10

INTRODUCTION

We live in a culture that continually tells us to pursue a higher standard of living in order to improve our quality of life. But “standard of living” and “quality of life” aren’t the same. One has to do with the stuff we accumulate. The other is about the peace we experience regardless of our circumstances.

What if your pursuit of a standard of living is undermining your quality of life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about one of the happiest times in your life. What were your finances like during that period?
2. Think about how you managed your money last year. What would you like to do differently this year?
3. How well do you document your expenses so that you know where your money is going? What influenced you to document your expenses the way you do?
4. In the message, Andy said, *“You can raise your standard of living with debt, but you can only raise your quality of life with discipline.”* How accurately does that statement align with what you’ve experienced?
5. What is one challenge you would face in developing a lifestyle reduction plan?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to begin to create breathing room in your finances? What can this group do to support you?

MOVING FORWARD

Money doesn’t raise your quality of life; financial breathing room does. In fact, you may need a lower standard of living in order to improve your quality of life. You can’t obey the teachings of Jesus without financial breathing room, because he said not to worry and you’ll worry a lot if you have no financial margin.

Don’t let your finances be your master.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Luke 16:13

PART 4: Choosing to Cheat

INTRODUCTION

At some point in our attempts to get the most out of life, we lose control of our lives. We try to force one more thing into our already busy lives and we reach the breaking point. Too much pressure causes an emotional breakdown. Too much debt causes a financial breakdown. Or maybe you're on the verge of a breakdown in your relationships.

What do you do when your work life is so full you don't have time for the people who matter most?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you a homebody or do you like to get out and do something whenever possible?
2. How much do you tend to be at ease at work but restless at home because work gives you a sense of progress and accomplishment?
3. In the message, Andy said, "*Mutual submission is the key to a great marriage.*" How does that statement sit with you? What are some things that make it difficult for you to submit to the needs of the people in your life?
4. Think about the way you balance your work and home lives. To what extent do you find yourself absent from important family events and promising to do better by pointing to a future that will make up for the past?
5. What are some challenges you would face in choosing to cheat at work?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to begin to create breathing room at home? What can this group do to support you?

MOVING FORWARD

There may not be enough time to get everything done that you want to get done or that culture tells you needs to get done. You may have to cheat. But where are you going to cheat? *Who* are you going to cheat?

In your desire to get the most out of life, don't lose control of your life. Create breathing room.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21