

Sermon & Bible Study Helps

THE BREATH OF THE ALMIGHTY GIVES ME LIFE

Emphasis Passage: Job 33:4

King James: The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

New King James: The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

New International Version: The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

New American Standard: The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Revised Standard: The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

New Living Translation: For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

New Jerusalem Bible: God's was the spirit that made me, Shaddai's the breath that gave me life.

Hebrew Text—Job 33:4

תַּחַיִּי:	שַׁדַּי	וְנִשְׁמַת	עָשָׂתַנִּי	רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים
gives me life.	of the Almighty	and the breath	made me,	the spirit of God

KEY WORDS (WITH STRONG'S REFERENCE NUMBERS)

וְנִשְׁמַת (w^enishmat) – noun, feminine, singular

(5397) נִשְׁמָה (n^eshamah) – vital breath, wind, inspiration

שַׁדַּי (Shadday) – noun, masculine, plural

(7706) שַׁדַּי (shadday) – Almighty, the Almighty

תַּחַיִּי: (t^echayyeni) – verb, Piel, imperfect, 3rd person, feminine, singular, with 1st person suffix

חַיָּה (chayah) to make alive, to live, have life, remain alive

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE

Bible verses about the Sanctity of Human Life

Genesis 2: 7; Job 10: 8-12; Job 31: 15; Psalm 22: 9-10; Psalm 100: 3; Psalm 127: 3;
Psalm 139: 13-16a; Jeremiah 1: 4-5.

CONTEXT

Job, a prosperous Hebrew who lost everything because of Satan's attack on him, became engaged in a lengthy debate with three friends who tried to persuade him that he was not the righteous man he claimed to be. Their reasoning was that there must have been some sin in his life that caused all of the pain and suffering he was enduring. Job steadfastly maintained his belief in God. But at the same time, he continued to justify himself.

After the debate between Job and his three friends concluded, Elihu, who had remained quiet through the entire debate, spoke up. He was upset that Job was "justifying himself rather than God" and that the others had failed to refute Job's self-justification (see 32:2-3). Elihu wanted the record set straight—that God was just and no man could claim complete innocence before Him.

SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY NOTES

Introduction

When modern man thinks of life, he normally thinks of the state of being alive. It is thought of as a state of existence that begins at birth and ends at death. To some, life is said to be an accident, a fluke of nature, suspended between two accidents—the beginning of the world (however that happened) and the end (however that will happen).

But that is not what God reveals in His Word about life. Life is so much more than a mere existence. It is a gift from God. And because of that, life is sacred. It is something to be highly regarded and protected, not demeaned or dismissed at will.

1. Life comes from God, v. 4a

Mankind did not just evolve from some lower life form. Elihu's testimony is that God has the power to give life. The name he used for God in the first part of the verse is *El* (the root of Elohim), which refers to the creative and governing power of God. The same name is used 44 times in the creation account in Genesis 1-2. That creation was a process that included the creation of man on the sixth day.

Just as God gave life, He also gave it purpose. David declared that "all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever" (Ps. 145:21). Blessing and praising God is a universal purpose of man. Every person is designed and intended by God to worship Him and praise Him for who He is and for His goodness toward them. In addition to this universal purpose of life, each life also

has a specific purpose, from the moment of conception into eternity. God revealed to Jeremiah that He knew him even before he was formed in the womb (Jer. 1:5). Every person, from the unborn to the infirm is part of God's plan and purpose as well. And even the person who is at death's door through some illness or some tragic event in life has a purpose in God's plan. We may not be able to see it, but countless families, friends, and even medical professionals have testified to the impact of someone whose life others had reckoned useless.

Since God is the giver of life and every life has purpose, life should be honored and respected. No life—whether that of a baby yet unborn in its mother's womb, that of an elderly person who is incapacitated or even in the last stages of dying, or anyone between those two extremes—is an accident or fluke of nature. Every life is an expression of the creativity of God and is made in the very image of God Himself (Gen. 1:27). These features imbue human life with a sanctity that should not be violated.

2. Life is a gift, v. 4b

The creation story makes it clear that all human life is a gift from God. When God created Adam, He breathed into him the breath of life. This act made man a "living being" (Gen. 2:7). Adam had not done anything to earn or deserve this blessing. God simply bestowed it. God then created Eve as a gift for Adam so that he would not be alone and would have someone of his kind for companionship. This gifting theme continues in the Bible. Eve declared that their first child was a gift from God (Gen. 4:1). Psalm 127:3-5 states that children are a gift from God.

Elihu echoed this gifting theme when he declared, "the breath of the Almighty gives me life." Elihu used the same word for "breath" that Moses used in Genesis 2:7, when he said that God breathed into Adam's nostrils "the breath of life." Elihu understood that every human life is a gift from God. F. Delitzsch, *Job, Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 218, notes that Elihu saw the significance of this inbreathing by God. He recognized that this act "endowed" him with life.

Interestingly, Elihu uses a different name for God than the name Moses used in the creation story. In Genesis 2:7 Moses said "the Lord God" breathed the breath of life into the man. Elihu used the name Shaddai. This name is used more often in Job than in any other book of the Bible (48 times). Commentators are uncertain about the meaning of the word. The name is usually translated "Almighty." The ancient rabbis believed the name was a compound of two words, which when combined meant "the one who is self-sufficient." Some scholars believe the word is derived from a word that means "to nourish," "satisfy," "or supply." This seems to fit the context of several passages, including this one. Elihu saw God as the all-sufficient One who supplied everything necessary for life (see also Phil. 4:19).

3. Life is special, v. 4b

The verb translated "gave me life" is a Piel perfect in the Hebrew language. This form often communicates two things: (1) a state of completion and (2) intensity. Elihu understood that the life that God had given him was his to live. He was not an extension of God, so that he was living out God's life within him. He had been gifted with a life of his own, and he was responsible to live it out. Perhaps, he used the Piel stem of the verb when he referred to this gifting in order

to emphasize the uniqueness of the gift. Life is precious and exhilarating. There is nothing else like it. It is to be appreciated for its special nature.

The aspect of intensity might be expressed by saying that "God did not just give life, He gave exciting life." G. Livingston, *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 279, comments that, "The OT speaks of life as the experience of life rather than as an abstract principle of vitality which may be distinguished from the body. This is because the OT view of the nature of man is holistic, that is, his function as body, mind, spirit is a unified whole spoken of in very concrete terms. Life is the ability to exercise all one's vital power to the fullest; death is the opposite." It is not to be some humdrum existence. God intended life to be full, even to overflowing (see John 10:10b).

Conclusion

Life is given to us to be lived in enjoyment and with purpose. While Elihu was wrong about Job's problem, he was not wrong about the source of life. He had read his Bible carefully, and he understood that life, every life, is a gift from God. As such, it is to be treasured and enjoyed. Indeed life is the fullest when one fulfills its purpose.

The testimony of the Bible is that God did not design any disposable people. All of life has purpose. Every person is capable of enjoying life to the fullest because God grants each life purpose. Along with that purpose comes the ability to fulfill it. It is this direct involvement by God in each life that helps to create our sense of life's sacredness. Whether it is a baby in the womb or a person who can no longer function without some measure of assistance, every life has purpose. Consequently, those who recognize this truth must commit themselves to protecting and helping every human being fulfill his purpose.

What Can One Person Do?

- Volunteer at a women's crisis pregnancy center in your area.
- Contact local, state, and federal legislators, asking them to support pro-life legislation in the areas of abortion and euthanasia.
- Register to vote. Then vote for pro-life candidates who are willing to take a stand for life.
- Become a foster parent to provide a home for a child in need of love and care.
- Contact your state's Baptist office to find out if there is a Baptist Children's Home in your state or one nearby. Work through them to adopt a child that needs a home.
- Write an article or letter to the editor of your local paper stating the pro-life message clearly.
- Ask your pastor to preach a pro-life message on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in January.

SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The sermon notes on this sheet, the accompanying fact sheet, and the enclosed materials serve as resources as you prepare to teach and then lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own answers.

Before leading this study, pray that the Lord will give a fresh or renewed vision for ministry to people in need as a result of this discussion.

Create Learning Readiness: Mention some story in the news about the devaluation of life, especially one related to abortion or euthanasia.

Say: Some people would consider these lives unworthy of life.

Ask: *How would you define life?* Let the members give their definitions of life. Post them for all to see.

Ask: *As you look at this list, how could we combine some of these answers to come to a more complete definition of life?* Allow members to make suggestions.

Say: I am giving each of you a pencil and a piece of paper. Please take about 5 minutes and write out what you believe would be a comprehensive definition of life. Before we share our definitions, let's see how the Bible defines life.

Read Job 33:4. Share some background about Elihu. If necessary, refer to the Context portion of this guide for some background.

Say: In this brief statement, Elihu reveals three truths that should affect our own understanding of the definition of life.

Ask: *Does some of the language in this verse sound familiar to you?* Elihu has in mind the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. (Read Job 33:4 again, then ask two other study members to read Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7.)

Ask: *How are these passages alike?* They talk of God's impartation of life.

Say: Elihu used two different names for God in this one verse. In the first part of the verse, he used the name *El* which is the root of the name *Elohim*. This name of God refers to several aspects of His nature. Among them are His creativity and governing power. This word is used 44 times in Genesis 1 and 2 where we find the account of creation. It is this creative nature of God that Elihu pointed to as the source of his own existence.

Ask: *Where did Elihu say that his life came from?* Elihu said that his life came from God.

Ask: *Can you see any reason in this passage or the Genesis passages we read that explain why God made man?* No reason is given.

Ask: *If humans didn't do anything to obligate God to create them, how should we understand our lives? As a gift from a loving God.*

Say: Elihu used another name for God in the second part of the verse. He called God "Shaddai." This name is used more often in Job than in any other book of the Bible (48 times). Commentators are uncertain about the meaning of the word. The name is usually translated "Almighty." The ancient rabbis believed the name was a compound of two words, which when combined meant "the one who is self-sufficient." Some scholars believe the word is derived from a word that means "to nourish," "satisfy," "or supply." This seems to fit the context of several passages, including this one.

Ask: *As you think about God as the giver and sustainer of life, what does the name Shaddai cause you to think about him?* Allow members to give and discuss their answers. Refer to the second point of the Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this guide for a discussion of the meaning of this name.

Ask: *Can you think of ways in which God has nourished you? What about satisfying you? What about supplying your needs?* (Ask members to think of specifics in each area of their own personal lives—not just general answers that could apply to anyone.)

Ask: *Does God do this for everyone?* Ask members to think of some Bible passages that speak of God's provision for all people. The fact that all people do not have enough is not God's failure. It is the result of the failure of some human beings to use the resources God has supplied or to share their resources adequately with others.

Say: Look at the last phrase of verse 4. Elihu said that God gave him life. The word that he used indicates both completeness and an intensity of life.

Ask: *When you think about life being full and intense, what does it cause you to think about God's gift of life?* It is special. This might be illustrated by saying, "God didn't just give us life, He REALLY gave us life." It is life in full measure.

Say: Now, let's take the three truths we saw in this passage and think about the definitions of life that we wrote earlier. Let's come up with a definition of life. Let the members come up with a definition they can all agree to.

Ask: *Now, is there anybody on the face of the earth for whom that definition does not apply?* No

Ask: *How should this definition cause us to think about other people?* We should see them as people of great value.

Ask: *Shouldn't we be involved in helping to protect all human life as a result? What could we do this week that would help honor all human life?*

Say: Very good. Let's try some of these ideas this week and share some of the results next week.