

# BREATHING LESSONS FOR YOUR CHURCH

*Surprise Me—Be the Surprise* The Two-Part Faith Experiment for Churches  
By Terry Esau

**What would happen if we, the church, learned how to breathe spiritually?**

**What would happen if we regularly inhaled the love of God?**

**What would happen if we began to exhale that same love?**

**What would the church look like and how would it impact our culture if we lived out those “breathing” patterns?**

Author Terry Esau has developed a Two-Part Spiritual Experiment designed to show us how to do just that. The first half of this experiment is described in Terry’s book *Surprise Me*.

## Part 1—Surprise Me

The Experiment: Simple. 4 weeks. You wake up every morning and pray a three-word prayer: “Surprise Me, God”—without expectations, qualifiers, or strings attached. Not asking for your wishes, but God’s. Then you keep a journal of what that looks like. (Study guides available.)

“Surprise Me is a simple wake-up-and-live, non-formulaic exercise in spending our days with God. This is a good read and an even better way to live.”

**Gregg Steinhafel, CEO, Target Corporation**

## Part 2—Be the Surprise

The Experiment: Simple. 4 weeks. This is an experiment in finding creative ways to become a bite-sized philanthropist. It is pulling on the pants of generosity and love and taking them for a walk—proactively becoming the church not because we’re supposed to, but because we get to. In Terry’s second book he says, “Once we have been surprised, we now get to become that surprise for others.”

“Terry writes in a fresh voice for people who don’t want to just know about God but would like to run into Him (or vice-versa). Read this book and be surprised!”

**John Ortberg, Author**

## Becoming a Church of Surprise

This simple two-part experiment can revolutionize how your church looks on the inside as well as how it looks to outsiders. A full curriculum is now available that will help your church become something beyond itself—like Jesus.

## Inhale/Exhale—Terry’s Breathing Story

When I was a kid, I used to see how long I could hold my breath. I think I got up to two minutes and something, but I was always plenty happy to blow out that bad air and suck in some good. Sometimes we Christians seem like we’re playing the same game—we’re spiritual breath-holders. We take in and take in, holding onto it as . . . long . . . as . . . we . . . possibly . . . can. But by midweek life has sufficiently battered us to the point where the spiritual oxygen in our lungs has been depleted—all the love gets used up—and turns into spiritual CO<sub>2</sub>. So we blow out that stale air and run back to church to gulp in more sanctified air.

Not only is this exhausting, but we also leave our culture turning away from us, as if we have bad breath . . . spiritual halitosis. Spiritual air that has been held for too long loses its love, its grace, its mercy. It smells of judgmentalism, legalism, and self-righteousness. It’s hard to “love our neighbors as ourselves” when years of shallow breathing have left us in spiritual-oxygen debt.

The Surprise Me God Experiment was my attempt to consciously place myself in God’s presence daily, to intentionally experience that organic relationship throughout all the moments of my days, to breathe in Jesus through the spigot of each moment—whether in church or not. And it was good, maybe even better than church air! In fact, it was so good that I no longer wanted to hold it in. I wanted to blow it out immediately so I could breathe it in again and again.

I found myself compelled to exhale that same love on others. I didn't have to blow them over with it because I hadn't "held it" for months; I wasn't short of spiritual breath. Now I exhaled that same life-giving love and forgiveness that I had inhaled, minus the agenda-driven, performance-based works. Just as God had Surprised Me, now I got to surprise others. I got to be His love. I got to Be the Surprise.

Once we have been surprised, we are ready to become the surprise. And when we have received that love, we no longer love out of obligation or duty. We love . . . because. We love because He first loved us. We love naturally—as naturally as breathing.

When we learn to breath spiritually, everything changes. Everything. It leads to freedom, peace, authenticity, and genuine relationships where love is comfortably received and given—inhaled and exhaled.

## Let This Breathing Revolution Begin in Your Church

Breathing Lessons start with a simple two-part experiment: Surprise Me. Be the Surprise.

To see a three-minute video with Terry introducing this two-part Spiritual Experiment, go to

[www.TerryEsau.com](http://www.TerryEsau.com) or [www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com)

We'd like to help bring "Breathing Lessons" to your congregation. We believe this simple concept will change your church, not because it is the latest cool new idea, but because it nudges human hearts to willingly say, "I want to be Your canvas, God. I want to go beyond knowing about You to knowing You. I want what You want for me . . . nothing more, nothing less." And then saying, "I want to become the brush in Your hand, Jesus. Use me to love others."

### Tools Available for Your Church's Breathing Lessons

- o Surprise Me (NavPress, 2005)
- o Be the Surprise (NavPress, 2008)
- o Study guide and journal
- o Small-group discussion guides
- o DVD—interviews, clips, stories, introduction by author Terry Esau
- o Week-by-week suggested content
- o Sermon ideas and outlines
- o Children's program ideas and illustrations
- o VBS curriculum—in process
- o Dramas—Scripts for short vignettes illustrating surprise concepts
- o Website—regularly updated with helps and ideas
- o And . . . bring Terry to your church to kick off Breathing Lessons.
- o Or . . . bring Terry and friends to your church for a daylong seminar that will layout the whole program and get things rolling.

To purchase Surprise Me and Be the Surprise at a special discount bundle price, call NavPress customer service at (800) 366-7788.

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"When the Artist of creation finds a blank canvas that is willing to be painted, he can paint nothing less than a masterpiece. And when we become his brush, he uses us to color the world with love."