

The text begins with a question we can all relate to: Who do the people say that I am? How do others see me? By what name and traits and deeds am I known? **BREATHE**

If I asked you, “Who are you?” how would you answer that question?**BREATHE**

I am Edward’s wife, mother of his three children: Steven, Jessica, and Jake. **BREATHE**

I am a sister to Patti, Charlie (Charlene) and to Bucky (Earl). **BREATHE**

I am the Mother - in - law to Stephanie and Alicia as well as a Nanna to Kayleen, a Grandma to Gabriel and Mason, and Dumma to Benjin and Freya and a GG to my great granddaughters Ellianna and Lillith. **BREATHE**

I am a Commissioned Ruling Elder here in Virginia as well as New York. **BREATHE**

I live in Hopewell we moved here three years ago, *after moving from living* all my life in Upstate NY, about 45 minutes from the Canadian border. **BREATHE**

I love to quilt (beginner) and scrapbook, garden. I love to clean and often when I am stressed I deep deep clean anything and everything I can find, nothing is safe. **BREATHE**

I recently added to our family an Australian Shepherd her name is SassyGirl, she is 5 1/2 months. **BREATHE**

I am a child of God, I am a follower of Jesus. That's who I am. Who are you? **BREATHE**

The most common way for others to know us is by name. That's usually the first step in getting acquainted. **BREATHE**

It's important, not only for others to know what to call you, but because your name is more than a label, it reflects who you are. **BREATHE**

A name is your identity. It's what people call you, it's what you respond to, it's what you understand about yourself.

From the day we are born, we are assigned this identifier. Some people get nicknames or change their name entirely after they are born, but the common thread is a NAME. **BREATHE**

How many of you have children? As I said earlier I have three, and I am afraid I have fallen with the same problem my parents had. When calling one child by name I call that child every name but what he or she are. For example: **BREATHE**  
We're also known by the company we keep: "Birds of a feather flock together," they say. This is one reason the Jewish leaders had such a hard time with Jesus, he associated with the wrong

people. He walked among lepers and ate with tax collectors and sinners. He broke the rules of social convention. His primary relationship was with God the Father. **BREATHE**

As we heard in our reading from the Gospel according to Mark. Jesus asked the disciples if they had figured out who he was. After a few guesses, Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah. **BREATHE**

But in his very next words. Jesus outlines what he's going to have to undergo for being who he is. The rejection of the religious authorities, suffering, being put to death. **BREATHE**

Peter responds as we might if someone told us that they had received a terminal diagnosis. He grabs him and says "No! This can't be! This should never happen to you." **BREATHE**

Jesus response to Peter had to sting. "Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts." **BREATHE**

Then Jesus calls people together and says, "If you want to follow me, get behind me. Follow my lead by standing up for justice and peace, speaking out on behalf of the vulnerable and marginalized, living your life in a way that shows you know that there are things that are more important than fear. **BREATHE**



Come, take your cross and follow me. **BREATHE**

“If you are going to be leaders” Jesus tells them, “then you must deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow.” **BREATHE**

So what do Jesus' words: "If anyone would come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me", really mean for us who want to be his followers???

**BREATHE**

Well it involves primarily how and why we make our daily choices. **BREATHE**

It involves whether or not we choose things on the basis of what is convenient and easy and self-serving or on the basis of what is right and good and loving. **BREATHE**

To follow Jesus is ask yourself what can I do to help, what can I do to make things better, what can I do to nurture and care for people. **BREATHE**

To take up one's cross means to forget one's own opinions about things and about people, to forget one's own righteousness and goodness, to treat **ALL** people with love, its about being the person who risks the disapproval of his or her friends because you choose not listen to their judgements, but instead seeks to bless those being criticized, and judged, it's about

giving to strangers and to those less fortunate or those you have made wrong choices in their lives the same kind of love you give to your coffee buddies and card partners and traveling companions. **BREATHE**

It's about choosing to follow Jesus, knowing that you will have to change, that you will have to forget yourself and what is easiest for you and remember instead what is the good and true and loving thing to do. **BREATHE**

This is the cross that most of us are called to carry each and every day. **BREATHE**

It is so simple yet it can be even harder to do than to actually die for Jesus. **BREATHE**

It is so hard because we are kind of attached to our opinions that's why so many of us spend so much time telling others what they are; and most people would rather choose to let others know who causes problems in the community and who should be avoided and who is not quite "up to snuff" than do anything loving for them. **BREATHE**

They would rather pass comment upon others than do even something as simple and as transforming as pass time in prayer for them. **BREATHE**

It is so easy to slip into the ways of the world, into the ways of the those who walk in darkness. To go along with what others are saying, or to let it go by for the sake of their so called friendship, it is easy to choose to save your own life all you have to do is go with the flow. **BREATHE**

The way of the cross contradicts the easy way of the world, the way of the cross often earns you the hatred of those who are evil, and calls upon you the hostility of those who do not like the light to shine upon their acts. **BREATHE**

The way of choosing to deny oneself is difficult because our self is reluctant to die reluctant to allow God to work in us and through us reluctant to trust that God can and will work a wonderful work in us when we follow in his path. **BREATHE**

**DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED!** In the words of the Apostle Paul, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”(8)  
**AMEN**