

The Sanctity of Life, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: The Author and Giver of Life

Acts 17:24-28

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson establishes that God is the source, giver, and sustainer of all human life. Building on the image of God from Lesson 1, it presses the truth that life is not self-generated or self-owned but received from God and held in trust. In Acts 17 Paul confronts the idolatry and self-sufficiency of Athens with a God who needs nothing from us and yet gives us everything, including “life and breath.” Job 12:7–10 adds that the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind are in God’s hand. The teacher should help the class feel the difference between owning life and receiving it.

What is at stake here is the very ground of human dependence and the limits of human autonomy. If God gives life, then life is His gift, precious because of its Giver, and not finally ours to discard or to take. This truth will become decisive in the later lessons on the beginning and the end of life, where the central modern claim is that a person has absolute authority over their own life or another’s. The class should leave this lesson with a settled conviction that the Author of life retains a claim on the life He gives.

Formationally, the aim is to cultivate gratitude and reverence in place of entitlement. Most of us live as practical self-owners, treating our breath, our time, and our strength as simply ours. The lesson seeks to replace that quiet assumption with the posture of a steward who receives each day as a gift and lives accountable to the Giver. Send the class home not merely agreeing that God gives life, but breathing differently, with thankfulness and trust.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read Acts 17:24–25. Paul says God “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” What does it mean that God is not served by human hands “as though he needed anything,” and how does this reveal God as the source and giver of all life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the radical claim Paul makes in a city of idols. The God who made the world “is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything.” This dismantles the entire logic of pagan religion, in which the gods are needy and the worshipers feed them. The true God is the opposite of needy; He is the overflowing source from whom all things come.

Press the positive side of the verse: He “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” Every human being, believer or not, receives their very existence from God moment by moment. Paul is not describing a God who started the world and stepped back, but a God who actively gives life and breath to all, continuously. This is the doctrine of God as Creator and sustainer in one breath.

Help the class see why this matters for the sanctity of life. If life is given by God to all, then life is a gift before it is anything else, and its worth derives from its Giver. We did not make ourselves, and we do not keep ourselves alive. This undercuts every notion that life is a possession we generate and therefore wholly control.

Draw out the worship this should produce. The right response to a God who needs nothing and gives everything is not bargaining or self-display, but gratitude and reverent dependence. Set the tone here for the whole lesson: we are receivers, and the giving God is worthy of our thanks.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God as the self-sufficient source who needs nothing from His creatures (Acts 17:24–25).
- God as the continual giver and sustainer of life and breath to all mankind.
- Life as a gift whose worth derives from its Giver, not a possession we generate.
- Gratitude and reverent dependence as the fitting response to the God who gives all.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Paul’s description of God overturn the logic of idol worship?
- What does it mean that God gives life and breath to all mankind, not only to believers?
- How does receiving life as a gift change the way we hold it?

Question 2

Student Question:

Take an honest inventory of your day so far: your breath, your heartbeat, your strength to rise from bed. How would your attitude toward this ordinary day change if you received each of these not as a given but as a gift from the God who “gives to all mankind life and breath”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This first self-examining question aims to move the doctrine from the head to the lungs. Paul says God gives “life and breath”; the question asks students to actually notice their breath, their heartbeat, their strength to rise, and to receive these as gifts rather than givens. Most of us are functional materialists about our own bodies, assuming they simply run on their own.

Help the class see how ingratitude hides in the ordinary. We thank God, perhaps, for dramatic rescues, but we take a thousand daily mercies for granted: that we woke up, that our heart kept

beating through the night, that our lungs filled again this morning. Each of these is the gift Paul names, repeated countless times without our notice.

Be practical about the shift. Gratitude is a discipline before it is a feeling. Suggest concrete habits: a sentence of thanks before rising, a pause to receive a meal, an awareness of breath as a returning gift. These small practices retrain the heart to live as a receiver.

Connect this to joy. A life lived in gratitude is steadier and gladder than a life lived in entitlement, because the grateful person is continually receiving where the entitled person is continually owed. Invite students to taste, this week, the difference gratitude makes to an ordinary day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Gratitude as the fitting response to the daily gift of life and breath.
- The hiddenness of ingratitude in the ordinary mercies we take for granted.
- Thanksgiving as a discipline that retrains the heart to live as a receiver.
- The connection between gratitude and a settled, joyful spirit.

Discussion Prompts

- Which daily mercies do you most take for granted?
- What is one habit of thanks you could begin this week?
- How does gratitude change the feel of an ordinary day?

Question 3

Student Question:

In verse 26 Paul says God “made from one man every nation” and “determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” What does it teach us about the worth of every human being that all nations share one origin and are appointed their times and places by God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Move to Paul’s sweeping statement that God “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.” The unity of the human race is a profound truth with enormous consequences. Every person, of every nation and color and class, descends from one origin and shares one Maker. There are no second-class branches of the human family.

Add the second half: God “determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” The times and places of our lives are not random. God is sovereign over when and where each person lives. This dignifies every life with purpose and situates it within God’s ordering of history.

Draw out the implication for human worth. If all nations share one origin under one God, then no human being is inherently more valuable than another by race, nation, or status. The same God who appointed the times and places appointed each person to exist. This is a powerful ground for the equal dignity of all.

Apply this against the human habit of ranking lives by group. Prejudice, nationalism turned into contempt, and every form of dehumanizing “us versus them” thinking collide with this verse. The class should see that reverence for life includes reverence for lives unlike our own, because they too come from the one God who made from one man every nation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unity of the human race from one origin under one Maker (Acts 17:26).
- God’s sovereignty over the times and places of every life.
- The equal dignity of all peoples, against every ranking of lives by race or nation.
- Each life situated with purpose within God’s ordering of history.

Discussion Prompts

- What follows for human worth from the truth that all nations share one origin?
- How does God’s appointing of our times and places give meaning to our lives?
- How does this verse confront prejudice and contempt for people unlike us?

Question 4

Student Question:

Where are you tempted to live as though your life and your time were your own to spend however you please? What would it look like this week to live as a steward of a life that belongs to God rather than as the owner of a life that belongs to you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question presses the doctrine of God as Giver against the modern instinct of self-ownership. Most people, including believers, operate on the unspoken assumption that “my life is my own,” to spend as I please. Acts 17 quietly dismantles that assumption: a life that was given is a life that is held in trust.

Help the class name the places this self-ownership shows up: how we spend our time, our bodies, our money, our days, as though we answered to no one. The point is not to produce guilt but to recover the truth that stewards live differently than owners. The steward asks not only “what do I want?” but “what does the Giver intend?”

Be careful to present stewardship as freeing, not crushing. The steward is not anxious about earning a life; the life is already given. Stewardship simply means living gratefully and

responsibly with what we have received. It is the natural posture of one who knows their breath is on loan.

Aim at a concrete reorientation. Invite each person to identify one area, time, body, resources, relationships, where they have been living as an owner, and to begin this week to hold it as a steward of God's gift. This shift will matter greatly when the study reaches the questions of life's beginning and end.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Life as held in trust from God rather than owned outright by us.
- The difference between living as an owner and living as a steward.
- Stewardship as a freeing posture of grateful responsibility, not anxious earning.
- The reordering of time, body, and resources around the will of the Giver.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most live as though your life were your own?
- How is the posture of a steward different from that of an owner?
- What is one area you could begin to steward rather than own this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read verse 28: "In him we live and move and have our being." What does this say about how dependent we are on God at every moment, and how does this dependence dignify rather than diminish us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Center the class on the heart of Paul's argument: "In him we live and move and have our being." This is one of the most profound statements about human dependence in all of Scripture. We do not merely receive an initial spark of life and then run on our own. At every moment, our living, our moving, our very being are sustained in God.

Make the dependence vivid. We are not like a clock wound once and left to tick; we are more like a song that exists only as long as it is being sung. Remove God's sustaining and we do not simply slow down; we cease to be. Paul is teaching radical, continuous dependence on God for existence itself.

Now address the surprising claim in the question: that this dependence dignifies rather than diminishes us. The world treats dependence as weakness and independence as strength. But to be sustained by God is to be the object of His constant attention and care. We are not abandoned to ourselves; we are upheld by the love and power of our Maker.

Apply this pastorally. Many people fear dependence, especially as age or illness strips away their independence. This verse reframes the whole of life as dependent, from first breath to last. The infant and the dying are not less human for being dependent; they are simply living openly the truth that was always true of us all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Continuous dependence on God for life, movement, and existence itself (Acts 17:28).
- Human beings as upheld by God at every moment, not self-sustaining.
- Dependence on God as dignifying, the mark of His constant care, not a defect.
- The infant and the dying as living openly the dependence true of us all.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that in God we live and move and have our being?
- Why does the world see dependence as weakness, and how does this verse reframe it?
- How does this truth change the way we view the very young and the very old?

Question 6

Student Question:

When life feels most out of your control, illness, loss, uncertainty, where do you instinctively turn? How does the truth that in God “we live and move and have our being” steady you in the moments when everything else feels unsteady?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the doctrine of dependence into the moments when we feel it most acutely: illness, loss, and uncertainty, when control slips through our fingers. The question asks where we instinctively turn at such times, because our instincts reveal what we truly trust.

Help students be honest. When life feels out of control, many of us turn first to worry, to frantic effort, to numbing distractions, or to despair. These are the reflexes of people who believe everything depends on them. The gospel offers a different anchor: the One in whom we live and move and have our being has not let go.

Offer real comfort without denying real pain. To say that our being is held in God is not to pretend that suffering does not hurt or that outcomes are guaranteed to be easy. It is to say that even when we cannot hold ourselves together, God is holding us. The ground beneath the believer is not their own strength but God’s faithfulness.

Move toward a practice of trust. Invite students to name one area of present uncertainty and to consciously place it in the hands of the God who sustains them. Suggest a simple turning to God

in the moment of fear, a deliberate recollection that they are held. This habit will steady them in the harder seasons the study will touch.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Our instinctive responses to loss of control as a revelation of what we truly trust.
- God's sustaining presence as the believer's anchor in suffering and uncertainty.
- Comfort that does not deny pain but rests on God's faithfulness rather than our strength.
- Trust as a deliberate practice of placing our fears in the hands of the sustaining God.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you instinctively turn when life feels out of control?
- How is resting in God different from denying that suffering hurts?
- What present uncertainty could you consciously place in God's hands this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read Job 12:7–10. Job says that “in his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” How does this teach that God holds authority over life and death, and why is it a comfort rather than a threat that our breath is in His hand?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Turn to Job 12:7–10, where Job, in the depths of his suffering, still confesses a towering truth: “In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” Even creation testifies to it; ask the beasts and the birds, and they will teach you that the Lord's hand has done this. God's authority over life and breath is woven into the fabric of the world.

Underline the scope: “every living thing” and “all mankind.” No life falls outside God's hand. He holds the breath of kings and infants, the powerful and the forgotten. This is the doctrine of God's authority over life and death, stated plainly. Life begins, continues, and ends within His hand.

Address why this is a comfort rather than a threat. To say our breath is in God's hand could sound frightening, as if we were at the mercy of an arbitrary power. But this is the God revealed in Christ, who loves us, who numbers our hairs, who gave His Son for us. To be in His hand is to be in the safest place there is. Nothing can snatch us from it.

Prepare the class for what is coming. This truth, that God holds authority over life and death, will be the steadying center of the later lessons on suffering, dying, and despair. If our breath is in His hand, then we can face even death without ultimate terror, and we will not presume to seize an authority that belongs to Him alone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's authority over the life and breath of every creature (Job 12:7–10).
- Creation itself as a witness to God's sustaining hand.
- The breath of all mankind held in the hand of a God who is good and loving.
- God's authority over life and death as a comfort to those who are His.

Discussion Prompts

- How does even creation testify that life is in God's hand?
- Why is it a comfort rather than a threat that our breath is in God's hand?
- How might this truth steady us as we approach the harder questions of suffering and death?

Question 8

Student Question:

Is there an area where you have quietly assumed that you, and not God, are the final authority over your life or someone else's? How does recognizing God as the Author and Giver of life reorder the way you make decisions?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question asks students to find the place where they have quietly assumed final authority over life, their own or someone else's. The assumption is rarely spoken, but it governs much: decisions made as if God had no claim, attitudes that treat certain lives as ours to value or devalue.

Help the class see how subtle this is. It is not only the dramatic cases. It shows up whenever we make ourselves the ultimate reference point, deciding what our life is for without reference to the Giver, or judging the worth of another life by our own measures. Recognizing God as Author and Giver dethrones us from a seat we were never meant to occupy.

Present this as good news, not merely correction. It is a relief to discover that we are not the final authority, that the weight of ultimate decisions does not rest on us alone, that there is a wise and loving God over our lives. Surrendering the throne is the beginning of peace.

Aim at concrete reordering. Invite students to name one decision or attitude they have been holding as if they were the final authority, and to bring it deliberately under God's authority this week, asking what the Giver of life would have. This reordering is precisely what the sensitive later lessons will require.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The quiet human assumption of final authority over life, our own and others'.

- Recognizing God as Author and Giver as the dethroning of self from a seat we cannot rightly hold.
- The peace of living under God's authority rather than the weight of being our own god.
- Decisions and attitudes reordered under the authority of the Giver of life.

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you assumed final authority over your life or another's?
- Why is it actually a relief that you are not the final authority?
- What decision could you bring under God's authority this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Trace how the truth that God alone gives life shapes our convictions about the beginning and the end of life. If life is God's gift to give, what follows for how we regard the taking of innocent life and the question of whether anyone may claim final authority over when a life should end?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it draws the line from God as Giver of life to our convictions about life's beginning and end. Gather the truths: God gives life and breath to all (Acts 17:25), in Him we live and move and have our being (17:28), and the breath of all mankind is in His hand (Job 12:10). If life is God's to give, the obvious question is whether it is ours to take.

Reason carefully from the doctrine. Because life is a gift from God and not a possession we generate, no human being holds absolute ownership of life, their own or another's. This is the deep ground beneath the convictions this study will develop: that the taking of innocent human life is a grave wrong, and that no one may rightly claim final authority to end a life that God has given.

Apply it to both ends of life at once. At the beginning, the unborn child's life is God's gift, not the property of any other person to dispose of. At the end, the dying person's life remains God's gift, not something to be actively and intentionally taken, even out of compassion, as though a human being held the keys of death. Later lessons (especially 6 and 7) will unfold each of these with care; here the class needs the principle.

Hold conviction and compassion together as you land this. The conviction is firm: life belongs to its Giver. But many in the class will carry grief or guilt connected to these very questions, and the same God who gives life also gives grace. Be clear that recognizing God's authority over life is not a hard saying meant to crush, but a true saying meant to anchor us, and to make room for mercy toward all who have been wounded in these matters.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Life as God's gift to give, grounding the conviction that it is not ours to take.
- The denial of absolute human ownership over life, one's own or another's.
- The protection of innocent life at its beginning as belonging to God, not to others.
- God's retained authority over the end of life, against the claim of a human right to end it.
- Conviction and compassion held together, anchoring truth while making room for grace.

Discussion Prompts

- If life is God's gift to give, what follows about whether it is ours to take?
- How does this truth apply to both the beginning and the end of life?
- How can we hold this conviction firmly and compassionately at the same time?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over Acts 17:24–28 and Job 12:7–10 together. Name one specific way the truth that God is the Author and Giver of your life is changing how you live, and one concrete step you will take this week to live as someone whose very breath is a gift from Him.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers Acts 17 and Job 12 and asks for a personal response. Have students look back over the truth they have traced: that God is the Author, Giver, and Sustainer of life, that in Him we live and move and have our being, and that the breath of all mankind is in His hand. The aim is not admiration but a changed way of living.

Press for one specific way this truth is changing the student. For one it may be a new gratitude for ordinary days; for another, release from the burden of self-ownership; for another, a steadier trust in seasons of fear. Spiritual formation lands in specifics, not generalities.

Then ask for one concrete step. Perhaps a daily practice of thanks for breath, a deliberate surrender of a decision to God, or a new tenderness toward a dependent person. The goal is that students would begin to live as people whose very breath is a gift from God.

Close by setting the trajectory. The truth that God gives and holds life is the steady center the whole study will lean on, especially in the hardest lessons. Send the class home breathing differently, with gratitude to the Giver and trust in the One who holds their life in His hand.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal appropriation of God as Author, Giver, and Sustainer of one's own life.
- Gratitude, surrender, and trust as the fruit of recognizing the Giver of life.
- A life increasingly lived as a gift received rather than a possession owned.

- This truth as the steadying center for the harder lessons still to come.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one way the truth that God gives your life is changing how you live?
- What concrete step will you take this week to live as someone whose breath is a gift?
- How does this truth prepare us for the lessons on suffering, dying, and despair ahead?