

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE New in 2022, part 5

SERIES New in 2022

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KEY SCRIPTURE Ezekiel 37:1-14

SYNOPSIS Even when it seems as though there is no hope for the future, God can make things new and flourish again.

HIGHLIGHTS Close with "Rattle" Video



☞ **New in 2022**

God is not done with us yet

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

☞ **...4 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.**

6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"

☞ **...10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet — a vast army.**

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

☞ **...13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.**

Listen to the way Dennis Cocks describes bony Christians in the Church today.

- 1. The Tailbone Christian – Who just sits and lets everybody else do the ministry.*
- 2. The Fingerbone Christian – Who is always pointing their finger at everybody else, not taking responsibility for their own actions. They blame everybody else for their problems.*
- 3. The Jawbone Christian – Who runs off at the mouth; who puts his mouth into motion before his brain is in gear; who spreads gossip.*
- 4. The Hipbone Christian – Who sits on his wallet when the offering plate is passed.*
- 5. The Wishbone Christian – Who comes to God with their "wish list" and that pretty much describes their prayer life.*
- 6. The Drybone Christian – Whose Christian life has withered up, because he isn't spending time with God.*

To understand Ezekiel's images, we must place ourselves in his position. Many of his listeners were convinced God had abandoned them. They were defeated and alone. The Temple was in Jerusalem; that's where God was, not with them in Babylon. The people were hopeless and helpless.



This was a valley of bones. Not one of the bones was in its correct position to make a skeleton, let alone any sinew or flesh and blood. Just dry bones; lifeless, parched, bleached bones. At first glance the damage seemed irreversible. There was no way humanly possible that they would ever arise from this defeat. It would be impossible!

There is a valley of dry bones in the life of many Christians. It's a dry place - there is no joy there. It's a dead place - there is no fruit there. It's a dangerous place - no believer should ever stay there.

☞ **Disobedience will leave your life dry.**

Psalm 51:8

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

This is a verse that David wrote describing his condition and praying for God's forgiveness after he sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. The joy is gone. The energy is gone. He was just hanging on. "God, my sin has done this." Let me tell you, unconfessed sin will sap the joy from your life. It will rob you of your energy. It will leave you dry.

☞ **Discouragement will leave you dry.**

Discouragement is a subtle weapon of the enemy. He uses it frequently because we so easily forget that it comes from him. Because of this weapon of discouragement, statistics tell us that every month in America 200 pastors quit the ministry and nearly 300 churches close down. Because of this weapon called discouragement the people of God become downhearted, hopeless, burned out and weary in well doing.

☞ **Division will leave you dry.** The bones were disjointed and dry – v7.

We need each other. This was God's first negative observation about his creation. In Genesis 2:18, he said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."

Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." Think about all the "one-anothers" in the Bible and then do it.

Dryness comes from Disobedience, Discouragement and Division. **The enemy also uses**

☞ **Deception, Distraction and Doubt.** These can grow into a cynical attitude.

-Fred Smith... Cynicism is cancer of the spirit. The bad cells of hopelessness attack the good cells of the spirit and, if undiagnosed, will eventually destroy the soul.

I was drifting towards a mindset of cynicism this last fall after a very difficult year. Thank God, I didn't fall into it completely. Don't let yourself go that far.

v. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."



☞ **There are no hopeless situations. There are only people who have grown hopeless about them.**

I remember reading several years ago about an experiment that was conducted by the psychology department of Duke University. They wanted to see how long rats could swim. In one container they placed a rat for whom there was no possibility of escape. He swam a few moments and then ducked his head to drown. In the other container they made the hope of escape possible for the rat. That rat swam for several hours before finally drowning. The conclusion of the experiment was just the opposite of our common conclusion. We usually say, "As long as there is life, there is hope." The Duke experiment proved, "As long as there is hope, there is life."

☞ **Quit looking at your circumstances and look at God.** A pessimist finds a problem in every opportunity, but an optimist finds opportunity in every problem.

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing--we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

How do we resurrect hope when things seem so utterly hopeless? **At the outset we need to know that God is present in our lives.** Here, Ezekiel looks over the battle field. He feels the hopelessness of a battle that has been lost, and a war that has failed. But God is with him. A hopeless situation does not mean that God has left you. Just because things don't work out exactly how we planned does not mean God is not at work in your life.

☞ **Three things to do when you feel like you are in the "Valley of Dry Bones."**

Step #1: Admit the problem

You can't fix a problem until you face it. There was no denying the situation that Ezekiel found himself in. God wanted him to know just how dead these bones were. He wanted him to realize that the problem was too big for Ezekiel to handle.

The problem most Christians face is that even though they may find themselves in a valley of dry bones spiritually, their pride keeps them from admitting it. Admit the problem.

☞ Step #2: Read the Word

If you are struggling; if your Christian life seems dry and dehydrated; if you are spiritually thirsty; then dive into the Water of God's Word. That's where you'll find spiritual refreshment. We need the Word of God spoken in our lives.

God's Word gives new direction.

v. 4 Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!



When God's Word goes forth, things begin to happen.

Hebrews 4:12

the word of God is living and active.

God asked Ezekiel to prophesy to dead, dry bones. Can you imagine Ezekiel's natural reaction? "Lord, they don't even have ears! They're dead! They're not listening! They couldn't care less what I have to say." How often have you felt that way about a loved one you've been witnessing to? Yet the command was clear. The dead bones would live. But they needed to "hear the word of the Lord."

In the New Testament, Lazarus remained dead until the Word of God was spoken through the Son of God, when he addressed the grave and said, "Lazarus, come forth."

Psalms 130:5

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and **in his word I put my hope.**"

Without the Word of God, we have only the words of humanity on which to lean for our understanding and hope, and that will always be insufficient. Read the word!

☞ Step #3: Trust God

In Ezekiel, the prophet is asked by God, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." He didn't know, but he knew God did.

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

Zechariah 4:6

...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

☞ God's Spirit gives new life.

v. 9 "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' "

Last week we discussed the vision in Zechariah 4 and saw that we need a constant flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that our lights can keep on burning. Trust God and stay connected to his life-giving flow because...

☞ God is not done with us yet. He wants us to be new in 2022.

The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room



number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

God wouldn't give us this word in Ezekiel if there was no hope, would he?

🔊 **Start video "Rattle."** You may have been in a season that feels like the valley of dry bones. Your hopes may have waned dramatically. You may have been on the verge of giving up. But, God is not done yet. What word is the Lord speaking to you today? What "grave" is the Lord going to bring you up out of through that word? He wants to revive his plan for your life. He wants to create an army of righteousness out of your bones of despair. He wants you to **be made new in 2022.**

During this song, you are invited to come to the front for prayer. We're not going to talk, we're just going to pray. If you want someone to pray with you, remain standing at the altar and I'll anoint you with oil and we will pray.