

This week we consider the way God stretches our imaginations (*Ephesians 3:20*). Six hundred years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took 10,000 of the brightest Hebrews to Babylon (Iraq). These exiles lived on the outskirts of hope. They longed to return to their homeland. God took Ezekiel to a valley filled with dry bones and gave him a vision of life's possibilities for his people.

1. What do we see?

2He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor, and they were very dry.

God's vision allowed Ezekiel to walk around the valley of dry bones. The vision focused on the disconnected, dry bones in the dusty valley. The bones no longer showed a common purpose. He had to reflect on the fact his people were living with selective memories longing for a world that was no more. Their hopelessness left them close to one another; yet all were struggling without a common purpose. Sadly, there appeared to be little desire for the living faith brought by fresh encounters with God.

2. What do we hear?

3He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

How should Ezekiel answer that question? His "yes" held no evidence. His "no" would limit the possibilities of God. Yet, God held the only legitimate remedy for his hopeless people. Ezekiel trusted in the capabilities of God. Change occurs as the "can't" of man submits to the "will" of God.

I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

We see change initiated by God and involving his spokesman.

4He said, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them,

'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!...

5This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones:

I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

6I 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.'" So, I prophesied as I was commanded...

Change requires optimistic obedience.

3. What is happening?

7As I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8I looked and the tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

The breath of God that animated the first man brought life to the disconnected bones in the valley. The same spirit of God can awaken life in his people as they respond to his word.

9Then he said... Prophecy to the breath... 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

God lifted the curse. God gave the people new life

11Then he said to me... "They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off... This is what the Sovereign Lord says... 14I will put my Spirit in you and you will live...'"

What happens when we give the Spirit of God freedom in our lives?

We move from death to life. *You were dead in your trespasses and sins...but God, who is rich in mercy made us alive in Christ.*

Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5

We move from doubt to assurance. *Be strong and courageous... the Lord your God will be with you. (Joshua 1:9)*

We go from being members of a dry audience to being members of a dynamic army. *We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)*

Our challenge is to allow what God wants to happen in his church to happen in our lives. Then the power of God will compel the people of God to burst through the doors, carrying new life into the community.

