

Can these dry bones live?

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Small Group Discussion

Opening question:

- Have you or someone close to you ever faced an impossible task? Describe... or...
- What types of tasks or challenges are currently most daunting or impossible to you? Explain.

HAVE SOMEONE READ THE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND:

The prophet Ezekiel found himself in a very discouraging set of circumstances. Ezekiel was a prophet who lived in Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Israel, about 6 centuries before the birth of Christ. In 597 or 598 BC, he was taken captive along with King Jehoiachin to Babylon, before the actual fall of Jerusalem. And much of his prophetic ministry played out in exile. Ezekiel was a man who suffered much. Not only had he been ripped away from his homeland, but he had watched his wife die. And he had been given the task of preaching to God's people in exile. Much of his message was bleak. He was to make sure that God's people understood why they had been taken captive—that it was because they had persistently turned away from God to worship idols, and had willingly engaged in all the horrific practices that came along with idol worship, like temple prostitution and child sacrifice. But Ezekiel was also tasked with calling God's people to repent—to turn back from their idolatrous pursuits to the living God, so that he could restore them.

1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being high), how much hope do you have that God could work through you and others to bring people on Long Island to Christ? Expand.

2. NOW TAKE TURNS READING Ezekiel 37:1-4

- a. Why would God give Ezekiel a vision of a valley of dry human bones? What do these bones represent (if unsure, v 11 may give you a clue)?
- b. In v3, God asks Ezekiel if these bones can live. What is God trying to teach Ezekiel through this vision?
- c. Ezekiel then responds. Does he learn anything? What does he learn?

3. Read vv 5-6

- a. In v 5-6, God is telling Ezekiel to preach to these heaps of old human bones, which seems to be a ridiculous task. Has God ever asked you to do something ridiculous or impossible? Describe.
- b. Ezekiel is to preach to those in Exile describing in detail the revival of these bones (flesh and breath restored). How might this give hope to those in Exile?
- c. From v. 6, what is God's stated reason that He will restore those in Exile? Why is this important?

4. Read vv 7-10

- a. Ezekiel obeys in the vision and preaches to the dry bones. The dry bones come together in two stages – first the flesh and then after Ezekiel obeys and preaches the 2nd part of God’s message, the breath comes. **What is the significance of breaking this reanimation of life into two stages?** (Hint: Word and Spirit)
- b. How can we be more open to the Spirit in our lives, especially when sharing our faith?

5. Read vv 11-14

- a. God interprets the vision for Ezekiel: The exiled nation of Israel has lost all hope and God will restore this hope. I count three parts to this hope. What are they and why is each one important? (Don’t look now, but if stumped, check the footnote below and see if you agree.¹)
- b. Is there a personal circumstance so daunting that you have lost hope? Has this passage helped?
- c. Sociologists estimate that less than 5% of people living on Long Island have a relationship with Jesus Christ. It can be intimidating to imagine sharing our faith with people who seem so resistant. Has the passage today encouraged you in this God-given task?

Share and Pray

- Among our usual prayer requests, let’s pray for those among us who are facing an “impossible” life situation. Also, let’s remember to pray that we will gain hope in our Sovereign Lord’s ability to work through our modest efforts to make dry bones live on Long Island.

¹ Restore 1) their land, 2) relationship with God, 3) spirit/eternal life.