

# Brentwood Baptist Church

BRENTWOOD SUMMER SERIES

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

JUNE 21

## MAIN POINT

Because Jesus is alive, it means the hope of life trumps the reality of death.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Share photo or object that represents the most desolate place you have ever visited.**

**What's the most desolate place you've ever been to?**

**What was it like there? What were some of the challenges in being there?**

**What did it feel like emotionally to be in the middle of a place like that?**

When you find yourself in places like these, you realize how fragile life truly is. In such a place, it can seem like death is all around you. That must have been how the prophet Ezekiel felt when he had a vision of a valley of dry bones. But in the midst of this landscape of death, God showed Him that He was powerful enough to bring life. For us as Christians, the hope of life trumps the reality of death because we know that Jesus is alive.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EZEKIEL 37:1-11.**

God has always been about resurrection. When Ezekiel received this vision, the people of Israel had walked away from God and were in the middle of experiencing exile from Him.

**What sticks out to you the most about the description of the valley?**

**Why was this valley a good picture of the spiritual state of Israel when they were in exile?**

**This vision was not just about Israel's national exile; it was also about a bigger spiritual exile that we are all a part of. In what sense were all of us exiled, or separated, from God?**

**Why is it essential that we recognize we all were once separated from God? What happens if we don't recognize it?**

This valley was the picture of death. Not only was it filled with bones, but they were dry bones—completely devoid of life of any kind. Even though we might not recognize it, the Bible tells us that we are all dead in our sin, separated from God because of our sin. All of us are, in other words, living in the valley of dry bones; the valley represents our separation. Until we recognize this fact, then the resurrection of Jesus and what He offers us because of it won't really mean much to us.

**Read Romans 3:10-18 and Ephesians 2:1-3. What similarities do you see between these verses and Ezekiel's vision?**

**Why do you think Ezekiel responded the way he did to God's question (v. 3)?**

**What does that mean about the solution to our spiritual separation from God?**

When Ezekiel saw the picture of death, he knew that the only way the bones could live is if God did something miraculous. No matter how much those bones might have wanted to live, they were powerless to change their condition. It's the same way with us; it's only through God's mercy and grace that the separation between us can be bridged.

**Why is it important that Ezekiel spoke the Word of God over the dry bones before they started to live?**

**What is the Word of God that God uses to bring us to life?**

**Why must we believe and remember the resurrection of Jesus in order to have hope?**

**Read Ephesians 2:4-8. How is this life God brought to us like the life He brought into the valley of dry bones?**

When Jesus Himself was in the valley of death, God the Father rolled the rock away from the front of Jesus' tomb and breathed life into His dry bones just as He did in this valley. This is God's message for us—the gospel. When we hear the good news, God breathes life into us as we believe. And as we are raised to life, just as Jesus was, we can know that the possibility of life trumps the reality of death not only for Jesus, but also for us.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. How is death pictured in these verses?**

**Do you typically see death as an enemy? Why or why not?**

## **How does the resurrection of Jesus change the way we view the reality of death?**

death is not the end for the Christian. Death was not part of God's original intent, but came about because of sin. Jesus beat back this last enemy on our behalf. Because He did, we no longer have anything to fear. Jesus took the punishment of death for us so that we could have true life in Him. Not only that, but if God is powerful enough to beat this enemy, to move that rock away from Jesus' tomb, then there really aren't any rocks in your life that He can't move.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Where are you in your spiritual journey? Have you truly crossed from being separated to being made alive in Christ? If not, what are some of the things that are holding you back?**

**If not, what are some of the things that are holding you back?**

**If the message that brings life from death is the message of the gospel, who is one person in your sphere of influence who needs to hear this message?**

**How are you going to remind yourself daily that Jesus is alive? What difference do you think that will make in your life?**

**What are some of the "big rocks" in your life right now? How can our group pray that God would move those rocks in the coming weeks?**

**Close with prayer holding a rock as a symbol of most important prayer need you have. Throw the rock away when prayer need has been answered.**

## **PRAYER**

Pray specifically in the way your group asked you to in the previous question. Ask the Lord to move these rocks in the lives of your group in the coming weeks.

## **COMMENTARY**

EZEKIEL 37:1-11

37:1-2. "The hand of the Lord was upon me" is Ezekiel's usual expression for a visionary experience. He was taken in a vision to a valley filled with human bones that were dried, bleached, and scattered. The prophet walked "back and forth" (lit. "around") in the

valley taking care not to touch any of the bones. As a priest he would have taken such precautions since touching a dead body, including these bones, was forbidden (Lev 21:11). The bones were characterized as “very dry,” indicating that they had been there for some time. This vast array of skeletons left unburied (it was full of bones) reminded Ezekiel of the execution of the judgment curses for disobedience (Dt 28:26).

37:3-6. Any suggestion that there could ever again be life in the bones would appear preposterous. Yet as Ezekiel surveyed the scene in the valley of bones, he heard a question, “Son of man, can these bones live?” (v. 3). The prophet’s answer was restrained and filled with his awareness of human helplessness in the face of death (cf. 24:15–27, the death of his wife) but also respect for the mystery of God’s power. He knew that if the bones could live it was a matter only God knew and that the giving of life was a deed only God could perform (v. 3). Thus when God told him to preach to the dead, dry bones, he obeyed despite its apparent absurdity (cf. John 11:43). The message he was to deliver was a simple one, “Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!” (Ezek 37:4). That word consisted of a promise to give breath, life, tendons, flesh, and skin to these bones so they would know that he is Yahweh (vv. 5–6).

37:7-11. Ezekiel’s obedience produced immediate results. Even before he had finished (cf. Acts 10:44), he heard the “noise” of the fulfillment of God’s promise (Ezek 37:7). The bones came together and were clothed with flesh but they still were not alive (v. 8). So God again commanded the prophet to preach to the breath (“breath,” “wind,” or “spirit”) to fill these corpses (v. 9). The same word may be translated by any one of these three words according to the context. “Winds” in the expression “from the four winds” is also the plural form. The imperative “breathe” is the verb meaning “to breathe/blow,” reflecting its use in the creation context of Gen 2:7 (cf. its use in Ezek 22:20–21). It clearly was God’s Spirit who was to give breath to these corpses, and Ezekiel was given the extraordinary task of summoning him. So he preached to the “breath,” life entered these corpses, and they stood as a vast, living, reconstituted army (vv. 9–10).