



The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know."

EZEKIEL 37:1-3

WEEK 2
**DRY BONES
DANCING**

KINGDOM MEN RISING START

Welcome to group session 2 of *Kingdom Men Rising*.

Last week we talked about being chosen for the challenge to live as a kingdom man. We saw the kind of man God wants for us to be and were challenged to extend our influence and impact for the glory of God.

Share one way you were encouraged by last week's session.

This week we will learn to overcome Satan's distractions and trust in God's plans, purposes, and promises for us.

Describe a strategy home-team fans use to distract the opposing team when they're trying to make a call to run a plan.

In what ways does Satan seek to use this same strategy to keep men from hearing clearly from God?

When an opposing team takes to the field in football, the home team fans will often yell loudly in order to keep the opposing team from hearing the play being called. In this way, they seek to disrupt the play and, essentially, become what is termed the "twelfth player" on the team.

Satan uses a similar strategy in our lives by keeping static on the line or inserting distractions into our hearts and minds so that we cannot hear clearly from God. Due to this effective approach, too many men remain down when they should be up, defeated when they should be winning, and lost when they should know the way to go. But God is calling to each of us loudly and clearly. It is up to us to focus, clear the static, and tune in to what He has to say.

Ask someone to pray before watching the video teaching.

Dry Bones Dancing WATCH

Use this space to take notes during the video teaching.

KINGDOM MEN RISING MAN UP

Use the following questions to discuss the video teaching.

When you leave your town, and go to another town, if you have on a local radio signal, you're going to lose contact the further you get away from home. But when you come back, you'll pick up that signal again, because you're coming home.

Read Isaiah 64:4.

For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.

Isaiah 64:4

Why do you think those who did not hear, as referenced in Isaiah 64:4, could not discern or perceive God's voice?

In what ways is this lack of hearing evident in our culture today?

How does proximity to God increase our ability to hear from Him?

Far too many men have left home. We've left our commitment to God and have committed to our culture instead. Yet we still wonder why we're in a dry place, and we're not picking up heaven's signal anymore. To hear from heaven we need to leave the dry place far away from home and trust in the God who breathes life where there appears to be none.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

Ezekiel 37:1-3

When Ezekiel was faced with the question of can these dry bones live, he gave the answer many men need to give today—"God, only You know. I can't answer that question because stuff looks so bad, and we're in such a mess, and things are so divided, and the chaos is so overwhelming." In other words, if this is going to be fixed, God has to fix it.

Dry Bones Dancing

What areas of our culture today—either the church culture or the culture at large—appear to be beyond fixing from a human perspective?

Describe a time where you felt like you had no solution to the problem at hand, and yet you witnessed God come through to turn it around.

The account of Ezekiel and the dry bones lying dead on the valley floor reflects what many men sense in their lives during trials and difficulties. They feel like there is no way out of their slumber, struggling, and stumbling. Yet God will do everything He has promised and promised in His Word.

If we're going to become the men God has created us to be, we have to trust God's power. God has spoken and He has not stuttered. When we trust Him and embrace the promises from His Word, He can redeem any difficulty and cause the dry bones of our lives to get up and dance again.

If we have God's promises and know God's power, why do we often fail to trust them when life gets difficult?

What promises of God do you believe men need to trust in today?

What promises do you need to trust in personally?

PRAYER

Father, make us men who hear You clearly. Remove the static from the line so that we can discern Your voice. Help us identify the distractions in our lives that are keeping us from truly turning to You and understanding the truths You've outlined for us in Your Word. In Christ's name, amen.



GOD'S WORD AND SPIRIT

Take a moment to consider how to prevent another malfunction in the Soyuz MS-10 rocket which failed to reach the International Space Station in October, 2018. Get as detailed in your solution as you need to be.

To be honest, that was a trick question. Because it's hard to fix a problem when you don't know the cause. Whenever you are looking for a cure, you must address the cause. Far too many laymen, pastors, and politicians are doing patchwork on symptoms rather than dealing with the systemic roots that have led to the decay in our lives, families, communities, and nation. If we are ever to get things right, we have to address the spiritual causes beneath the brokenness we are experiencing.

God has given us two key methods for curing what ails us. He has provided two critical components we must apply in order to rise up from the ashes of decay. Both of these principles were given to Ezekiel when he stood in the valley of dead, dry bones. They are: 1) Return to God's Word, and 2) Receive a fresh encounter with God's Spirit.

1 RETURN TO GOD'S WORD.

Again He said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.'

Ezekiel 37:4-5

Men, if you're dry—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, or in any other way—it is most likely because you are distant from God and His Word. Spending regular and unhurried time in God's Word is essential for spiritual life and growth.

When will you spend time with God daily? Draft a battle plan below. Set a time and a place. Write down your approach here.

Dry Bones Dancing

Just as a computer system can only work off of the information inputted into it, your mind and heart needs the insertion of God's Word in order to utilize it. What method can you apply to memorize God's Word?

2 RECEIVE A FRESH ENCOUNTER WITH GOD'S SPIRIT.

Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army."

Ezekiel 37:9-10

After the truth of His Word was given to the dry bones in the valley, God then gave them the power of His Spirit. The original Hebrew word translated as "breath" in verse nine is the word God used to identify His Spirit at the beginning of the creation process in Genesis 1:2. With His Spirit, God breathed new life into the dead bones. Through this combination of the Word and the Spirit, God awakened lifeless bones.

How does the Holy Spirit awaken and invigorate God's work in you?

List three practical ways you can connect more authentically with the Holy Spirit. Seek to apply these three ways every day this week, and then come back and describe what impact that had on your life.

BIBLE STUDY 1

INTIMACY WITH AN IMAGE

A few years ago, I received a phone call from a friend who felt hopeless. His life had taken a turn for the worse, and he saw no way out. I tried to remind him about God's ability to make a way out of no way and encouraged him to keep his eyes on Christ. But the more we talked, the stronger the resolution to remain hopeless came through in his voice. The next day I learned my friend had taken his life.

This wasn't the first person I knew who had taken their life, but this one hit me particularly hard. I wondered if I could have said something different to make him change his mind. The weight of his words and the faintness of his voice hung heavy over me for a very long time. Hopelessness is a terrible thing because it means you have given up on the future. You've thrown in the towel. Far too many men today are living in hopelessness.

You see this hopelessness when men walk away from their responsibilities to their families, to their communities, or their church. You see this hopelessness when they no longer believe that God can make a difference in history. This hopelessness manifests itself in a culture rife with conflict and division. You may wonder, "Why?" Why did God allow this to get this bad? I have discovered that God has a way of letting life get so low until the only way you can look is up. In Ezekiel, we see God's judgment poured out on a culture filled with impurity and idol worship.

Read the Scripture below and answer the following questions.

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols.

Ezekiel 36:16-18

In what ways is God's judgment evident in societies and cultures today?

Read Proverbs 3:11-12. Why does God discipline us in response to disobedience? Why is this actually good for us?

In Ezekiel's day and in our own, the world is filled with idols. Simply explained, idolatry is intimacy with an image. It's not necessarily bowing down to a carved statue stuck on a pole. An idol is anything that usurps God's rightful rule in your life. Idols come in all shapes and sizes. What's more, they can even be found in the church. Idolatry centers on alignment—you align your thoughts, words, and actions under what you value most.

What are some modern-day idols we esteem in our culture?

Making this more personal, what is an idol you struggle to place in its proper position under God?

What steps do you need to take to remove this idol and realign your life under God's rule?

Idolatry manifests itself in lifestyle choices that are contrary to God's expressed will in His inerrant Word. Consider what Paul says in his letter to the church at Colossae.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Colossians 3:5

What are some ways idolatry becomes evident in the choices we make? In what way does greed manifest as idolatry in a person's life?

KINGDOM MEN RISING

How should knowing that greed and impurity are considered idols by God affect the way you approach both?

Clinging to idols is forsaking the faithfulness of God. When the pendulum of our hearts swings towards idolatry, it slides away from God's love and power. However the opposite is also true. When we forsake idols our heart swings into alignment with God's grace, faithfulness, power and love in our lives. To embrace God's will and activate the flow of His love and power into our lives, we must turn away from idols. God has made it clear, through His Word, how to activate the flow of His love and power into your life, as well as how to deactivate it.

Turning away from common cultural temptations like impurity, evil desires, greed, pride, and selfishness enables you to open up the floodgate of God's love, favor and blessing in your life. Idolatry is the number one factor in most of life's difficulties and disasters. Until we identify the root of idolatry and deal with it by removing it from our hearts, we cannot expect a different outcome.

Read Ezekiel 37:14. What power has God given to help you uncover and remove idols?

Describe a time when God removed a sinful pattern from your life, or in someone's life whom you know.

What did it take to root out the idols?

God has given us the means and the method for removing the idols that grip our hearts. Through the Holy Spirit, He has given us new life in the Spirit which provides the means to diagnose and dismiss our idols.

Dry Bones Dancing

When God speaks of the resurrection in the Book of Ezekiel, it ultimately points us to Christ who has conquered sin, death, and the grave. Through Jesus, we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit (the new Spirit God promised in Ezekiel, and His life inside of us helps us put to death the idols our flesh leads us to pursue. Prayer and self-evaluation provide the methods for us to begin uprooting idols and casting them aside.

Describe what it means to "put to death" that which belongs to your earthly nature.

How does removing our idols free us to glorify God?

Read Psalm 139:23-24. Why is it essential for men to pause and take inventory of their heart and lives regularly?

How does prayer contribute to spiritual growth?

Prayer lets us communicate directly with God. As we bring our request, God begins to direct the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. We hear from Him and invite Him to put to death what is earthly in us. Let's end our time today by taking advantage of God's means and method for dealing with idolatry.

Pray about one area in your life that needs to be "put to death" in order that it can be raised again according to God's Word and by His power. Ask God to draw your attention to what this is and how you can honor Him by letting it go and ridding its hold on your heart. Then, seek God's wisdom on what you can do to replace that gap in your life in a healthy, loving, and productive way.

BIBLE STUDY 2

A KEY WITHOUT A CAR

Imagine for a moment that someone handed you the keys to a brand new Lamborghini. The keys were all yours, they said. But the car was nowhere to be found. In fact, when you asked where the car was, all you were told is, "Somewhere." Fast forward a few weeks and, despite looking for the car for days on end, you still have not found the car. At that point in time, how valuable are those keys?

Most people would answer that question, "Not very valuable at all." This is because keys—on their own—won't do you any good. Keys need to be coupled with a car to understand their true value.

Similarly, all of us have access to Bibles, whether it's a physical copy or an app on your phone. But in order to unlock the true value of God's Word, we must commit to reading and applying it. Both pieces are necessary. God's Word must be understood and applied in order for it to activate God's power in your life.

Why is it spiritually dangerous to read God's Word without applying it to your life?

God's Word does not work just because you get excited about it when you read it. It doesn't work just because you heard a sermon or a podcast and got all fired up. It doesn't even work because you spent some time thinking about it or posted a verse on social media. It doesn't work because you could ace Bible trivia. All of those things are nice. But if it's not applied, you won't get to experience the fullness of what God's Word is meant to do. To listen to God's Word but refuse to act on it causes a man to do little more than waste his life.

Often when God does spectacular things in the Bible, He asks His people to first take a step of obedience. Read the following verses and describe the common theme throughout..

Dry Bones Dancing

As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land.

Exodus 14:16

It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap.

Joshua 3:13

We read before Lazarus was raised from the dead:

Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

John 11:39a

List the simple steps of faith that preceded God's miraculous work in the verses you just read.

Why do you think God often uses our obedience to bring about the power of His Word in our lives?

Describe the difference between awareness of God's Word and obedience.

Without faith, obedience, and application hearing God's Word is just knowledge acquisition. Simply hearing the Word then moving on with life as if nothing has or should change will never produce the supernatural intervention of God in your circumstances. Hearing, believing, and doing the Word of God is the foundation of wisdom.

Wisdom is both the ability and the responsibility of applying God's truth to life's choices. You can only identify a wise man or a fool by his decisions. We feel like dry bones wasting away because we haven't sought God's wisdom to bring about a different result. Godly wisdom sets men on a path out of the valley of sin.

KINGDOM MEN RISING

Read James' teaching on wisdom.

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James 3:15-18

What is the difference between earthly and godly wisdom?

In what ways can you develop and strengthen your ability to apply godly wisdom to your everyday decisions?

Have you ever experienced a time where you tried to merge human thoughts with God's wisdom? What was the result?

God created you for more than you can ever imagine. But often we miss out on all that God can or will do through us because we pursue the wisdom of the world rather than the wisdom of God. Looking back to our illustration, we're the man standing in an empty garage holding the keys but not knowing what to do with them.

To embrace all that God has for you, you have to interact with His Word and His Spirit so that His Spirit can bring the wisdom of His Word to your heart and mind. That means more than just reading and knowing the Bible. You have to act on what it says (see Jas. 2:26). The power of God's promises remains dormant unless activated by your faith.

Pursuing godly wisdom brings "good fruits." In other words, godly wisdom produces results. Embracing wisdom means we are obeying and applying God's truth to our lives. God is waiting on you to take your rightful place in this world. He is waiting for you to rise to the occasion and secure your spot of significance in His kingdom made manifest on earth. But that happens when you step out — fully, faithfully, and single mindedly — according to the direction of His will.

Dry Bones Dancing

In what way does God want to you to apply His Word in a more proactive way to life's choices?

How would you advise someone who is new to studying God's Word on how to find His wisdom on a specific subject? If you do not know what you would say, consider doing an Internet search on some helpful tips, then writing them down to share with others.

Where is God calling on you to seek His wisdom? What area of life do you need a deeper understanding of His Word?

God is not going to force His wisdom on you. You have to discern it and then apply it. He has given each of us the free will to make our own choices, for good or for bad. But He has also given us the ability to ask Him for wisdom on how to make the best possible choices in whatever situation we face (Jas. 1:5).

Pray for God's wisdom on how to know His Word better, understand it more fully and apply it more diligently in your life. Ask Him to reveal to you those areas in the past where you have gotten off track from applying His truth to your choices. Once these are revealed, ask for His forgiveness and guidance on how to restore what has been broken or damaged due to those decisions. Then seek to obey Him in what He reveals to you to do. With His help, He can revive anything in your life that seems beyond redemption. But, remember, it requires your participation in the process.