



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic March 29, 2020

by Garland F. Pierce

Wonderful Words of Life

Ezekiel 37:1-14

37:1 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

37:2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

37:3 He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

37:4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

37:5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

37:6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

37:7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

37:8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

37:9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

37:10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

37:11 Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are

dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.'

37:12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

37:13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.

37:14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

The people of Israel find themselves in uncertain times and uncharted territory. Because of the invasion and conquering of the Babylonians, life as the Israelites once knew it has changed. They are cut off; "social distancing" is in full effect with leaders and influencers exiled, families separated, and the Temple essentially off limits. Death—physical, spiritual, and social—is all around. Dry, hopeless, fearful, scattered, DEAD...

The prophet, Ezekiel, must live out his calling in the midst of all of this. The Spirit of God places him right in the middle of this uncertainty, pain, fear, and death, and asks him, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel has the wisdom to know what he knows and what he does not. He knows he does not know the how or the when; he can only guess about the why. The what is fairly clear. He stands in the midst of the where. But because of his knowledge of the past and because of his faith, Ezekiel knows the WHO and says, "O Lord GOD, you know." And maybe no surprise to us, God tells the prophet to prophesy, to speak to the bones and to the breath. The prophet obeys. The prophet speaks. And God acts. Bones come together, the breath brings new life, and the people have hope for tomorrow.

Scientists are working feverishly to understand as much as they can about the how in order to make best predictions about the when. Many philosophize and theologize about the why; they may be right; they may be wrong. The what is a pandemic that most have never experienced the like of before. The where is the whole inhabited earth. As people of faith, we know the WHO. This WHO is not the World Health Organization, even though we are thankful for all it's hard work to end this pandemic. Our WHO is the one who created the earth, the one who created, cares for, and loves us all. The One who says to us, even now, "Speak!" Many have been together for some days in the same quarters, spending more concentrated time together than perhaps ever before; things have been done, feelings have been felt, and sometimes words have been said. This is to be expected and all is very understandable. But, be careful what you say for your words have power! Speak words that uplift and not tear down. Speak words of affirmation, not condemnation. Speak words of truth, not lies. Speak words of encouragement, not words of false hope and fear. Speak words that tell of God's love and God's power. We can speak a word of thanks to the first responders, health professionals, and those who cannot stay home because they must serve. We can speak a word of comfort to those who are bereaved and cannot have the physical presence of family and community at this time of loss. We can speak a word of congratulations and assurance to the would be graduate and the new parent who are facing a future that looks scary and uncertain. We can speak a word of friendship to the one who lives alone or feels alone. Speak, ministers! Speak, lay! Speak, elders! Speak, youth! Speak, mothers! Speak, fathers! Speak, children! Speak, neighbors! Speak, friends!

"I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, then honestly share what words you have heard this week that were hurtful or unpleasant to you. Likewise, share what words you might have said that were hurtful or unpleasant to others; seek forgiveness. Finally, reflect on and share, if you wish, when during this pandemic you have heard from God directly or through others. How did you respond?

PRAY: Gracious God of Life, in this time of pandemic, now more than ever, I want to walk with resurrection authority in my life! I want to have the testimony of Ezekiel in being faithful and true to your word; even when I cannot see the outcome, I have faith that you know and will act. Forgive me when I have not obeyed what you have spoken. Grant me a willing and obedient heart to follow your commands and trust you with the outcomes. Teach me how to speak life to the dead areas of my life and those around me. Make me a vessel of your power so that others can come to know you are the way, the truth, and the life. Breathe on us breath of God, even now, as we speak and pray in the Spirit as our Lord taught us to say, **“Our Father, who are in heaven...**

ACT:

1. Take a few minutes and call someone or several persons who may live alone to check on them. Share words of life.
2. Take pieces of paper or sticky notes and write down some words of life that you want to hold to, think about, and even use this week and post those words (maybe in the prayer area, on the refrigerator, or some area where you will see the words). Throughout the week, when you see them, speak them aloud or even with a whisper.
3. Refer to the children and family activities that accompany this devotion.

Song:

Sing Them over Again to Me
(Wonderful Words of Life)
AMEC Hymnal, #207

Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life;
Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful words of life;
Words of life and beauty, Teach me faith and duty,

Refrain

Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life;
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life.

Christ the blessed one, gives to all, Wonderful words of life;
Sinner, list to the loving call, Wonderful words of life;
All so freely given, Wooing us to heaven,

Refrain

Sweetly echo the gospel call, Wonderful words of life;
Offer pardon and peace to all, Wonderful words of life;
Jesus only Savior, Sanctify forever,

Refrain

Let It Breathe on Me
AMEC Hymnal, # 293

Refrain

Let it breathe on me, Let it breathe on me, Let the breath of the Lord, now, breathe on me,
Let it breathe on me, Let it breathe on me, Let the breath of the Lord, now, breathe on me.

1. While I'm working, Lord, in Your vineyard here, I can do naught if Thou aren't near,
Oh, come, blessed Lord, just so close to me That I may feel You breathe on me.

Refrain

2. When the pathway, Lord, I cannot see, When the way is dark, Lord, breathe on me,
Give me grace to know when Thou art near, Oh, I pray Thee, Lord, please breath on me.

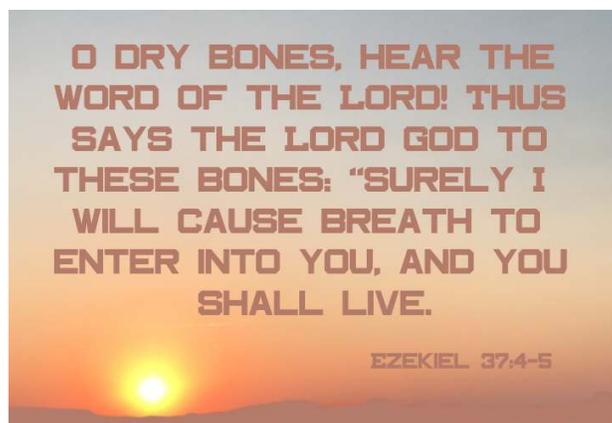
Refrain

Children's Song:

Dem Bones: <https://youtu.be/hYeQUXXYvK0>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.