ECHO
REPRODUCING GOSPEL LIFE IN OTHERS
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And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 TIMOTHY 2:2
Writing to young Timothy, Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Paul’s challenge is clear – as the gospel has produced fruit in your life through me and other witnesses, seek to reproduce or “echo” the same in others. This call to make disciples and “pass the baton” of faith is ultimately a call toward humble dependence upon Christ through a revived life. Making disciples starts with me!

These devotionals with prayer points are intended to assist believers and churches as they seek Christ personally and corporately for revival and spiritual awakening. Ezekiel 37:1-14 provides the biblical basis for the five sections of devotions. Each section of six devotions is focused on one prayer principle related to revival and spiritual awakening found in Ezekiel 37:1-14. The church in America is in desperate need of the Lord’s manifest, holy presence. Spiritual awakening always produces hot-hearted and faithful servants who “echo” or “reproduce” the gospel, eventually resulting in a “rapid-running” of the gospel. May the Lord use these devotions and prayer points to challenge and encourage you and your church to unite with others, seeking Christ for an outpouring of His presence through revival and spiritual awakening!

Walk through 2 Timothy 2:2 with an N.C. Baptist leader at the beginning of this section. Video available at prayfor30days.org.
“The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:1). Throughout history, God has always provided instruments in His hand to live and speak His Word boldly during times when His people were struggling with disobedience, sin and the fulfillment of His mission. Ezekiel was a priest, a prophet, a watchman and an instrument — one that was available and ready for use. His availability before the Lord allowed him the opportunity to be used mightily by God as His messenger of hope. Today, the church will “echo” and reproduce the life of Christ through awakening only when God’s people become available instruments in His hand. We must pray for available instruments!

Walk through Ezekiel 37:1 with an N.C. Baptist leader at the beginning of this section. Video available at prayfor30days.org.
In this passage, the people of God are in despair because of their departure from the Lord and His judgment upon their sin. They are in exile and suffering greatly at the hand of their captors. Their hearts are discouraged, their hope is diminished and their outlook for future change is non-existent. Their homeland is in waste and they feel “cut off” from the Lord (Ezekiel 37:11). In fact, their condition is compared to that of an army that has been annihilated and overrun — they were dead, dry bones with no life, no hope and no future (see Ezekiel 37:2). However, it is in these dark times that God can do His greatest work of revival among His people. In this passage, God used Ezekiel as an available instrument because his heart and life were prepared by the Lord for such a time as this — that’s how God works!

Ezekiel’s present availability was the result of his daily faithfulness as a priest, a watchman and a prophet. He was constantly walking with the Lord, in His Word, making known God’s message to His obstinate and exiled people. Ezekiel’s life of obedience allowed for yet another instance when He could be used as God’s available instrument. God’s use of instruments never takes place in a vacuum and cannot be understood apart from His redemptive and eternal purposes. The people of God were in desperate need of a fresh Word from God. They also needed a renewed vision of God’s grace, anointing and hope. They had taken their eyes off of God and had nothing left to offer. They needed help, and they needed hope. In that day, God’s instrument of help and hope was Ezekiel. Who will it be today? Are you available for use as an instrument of revival in God’s hand?

DAY 1

ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

Ezekiel 37:1 “The hand of the Lord came upon me . . . and set me down in the midst of the valley”

Ask God to prepare your heart and life for use as an available instrument of revival and awakening.

Pray for the Lord to raise up available instruments of revival and awakening in your church, community, state and nation.
DAY 2

GOD’S HAND

Ezekiel 37:1 “The hand of the Lord came upon me”

In 1929, God’s hand of favor and direction was on Joe Church. Joe was a missionary leader serving in the East African country of Rwanda with the Anglican Church Missionary Society. Joe was exhausted with the work while ministering alone to the overwhelming physical and spiritual needs of people. Joe longed for a fellow-laborer to be raised up to assist in the mission. Joe also deeply desired the revived life and a genuine move of God that would sweep multitudes into the Kingdom. As he prayed, God raised up a fellow African, Simeon Nsibambi, with a kindred spirit. Together, they labored on their knees and soon a spirit of revival and awakening swept their region. God used Joe Church, as well as those converted under his ministry, to start and plant churches, spreading revival fires to other nations such as Uganda and Burundi. The East African Revival had begun, and eventually spread to other denominational missions and churches all over East Africa, lasting some 50 years. Thousands were converted, and thousands of churches were revived as God’s hand used leaders like Joe Church.

The phrase “hand of the Lord” refers to God’s initiative, direction, favor and drive in Ezekiel’s life and mission. Let’s face it — who in their right mind would sign up for an assignment to go and preach to a valley full of dead dry bones? Yet Ezekiel was an available and willing messenger. The use of the phrase “hand of the Lord” also points to fact that this was a God-centered mission birthed in God’s heart. Ezekiel was therefore going because of God’s desire, direction, authority and favor. As an available instrument in God’s hand, Ezekiel’s mission had meaning and purpose that surpassed his own abilities, understanding and purposes. Because Ezekiel knew that God’s hand of favor and purpose was the chief motivating factor behind His going, Ezekiel could go with great resolve and confidence. Who’s driving your ministry or mission?

Pray for God’s hand of favor to rest upon you as His available instrument.

Pray for the Lord to raise up others through your life and through your church that He can lay His hand upon.
In 1949, James Murray Mackay was faithfully leading his church to gather in prayer for revival and spiritual awakening. His heart’s desire was for a fresh moving and outpouring of God’s Spirit. Two church members and sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, were unable to attend the prayer gatherings because of physical limitations but desperately prayed for revival from their home. After a few months of earnest prayer, Mackay was led by God’s Spirit to enlist Duncan Campbell to come to his church to hold a series of mission meetings. When Campbell arrived, he sensed an unusual nearness of God’s Spirit as he walked through the town. As he preached, Campbell realized that the nearness and direction of God’s Spirit was heavy upon Him. After the second night’s service, silence fell upon the crowd during the invitation as God’s Spirit worked deeply in hearts. Campbell eventually dismissed the crowd but then something unusual took place. The crowd left the building, but they did not leave the property. Soon the doors opened and the people flooded back in the building. Other people from the community began coming from their homes as the services continued. The Hebrides Revival had begun with thousands being converted to Christ over the next decade.

When God led Ezekiel out to the valley of dry bones by His hand, He also anointed him with His Spirit. The phrase “in the Spirit” refers to Ezekiel’s anointing with God’s manifest presence, power and wisdom. This vision was not just a dream or something Ezekiel imagined God wanted him to do. It was produced by God’s manifest presence, which was at work in and through Ezekiel’s life. This anointing showed God’s initiative and desire to accomplish this task. It also showed that the raising up of dead dry bones to new life would require a messenger who was operating under the inspiration, wisdom and power of God. Thus, because of God’s Spirit, Ezekiel could see the dead dry bones from God’s perspective, obey His Word and be used as His instrument. If the church in America is ever going to be awakened out of its apathetic and sleepy state, available instruments who are operating “in the Spirit” are desperately needed. Are you “in the Spirit” and available?

Pray for a fresh anointing of God’s Spirit in your life.

Pray for God’s manifest presence to be unleashed upon your church.
**Ezekiel 1:1** “The hand of the Lord . . . set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones”

When Southern Airways flight 932 crashed on Nov. 14, 1970 killing all 75 persons aboard, the town of Huntington, W. Va., where Marshall University is located was devastated. The chartered flight was carrying Marshall University’s football team, including 37 football players, five coaches, the university athletic director, doctors and 25 members of the university’s booster club. Over the next few months, the future of Marshall’s football program hung in balance. Great obstacles existed, but the most pressing obstacle was did university leaders have the heart to continue, rebuild and support a football program at Marshall? During an emotional meeting, students and a few remaining coaches and football players convinced university leaders to continue the football program. Soon, a new coach was hired, a staff was put in place, players were recruited and by the start of the 1971 football season, Marshall University’s football program was up and running. In fact, Marshall won two games in that first season after the crash. Despite only two wins, Marshall’s new coach, Jack Lengyel, considered his first season at Marshall a success. Why? It certainly was not because they had a winning season, but it was because they were able to field a team and play in all their games.

In today’s text, Ezekiel went with the Lord to a specific place of service as an available instrument in His hand. Ezekiel did not stand on the sidelines or sit up in the stands. No, despite the difficult and hopeless situation, He went with the Lord and joined His work in the valley of dead dry bones. Today, churches have their backs against the wall as evil marches forward and sin runs rampant. In the midst of a moral free fall, many believers have a fatalistic outlook toward the spiritual and moral decline and are saying, “It is what it is,” or, “What can we do about it anyway?” It is sad, but the fact is that many believers and churches have retreated from fulfilling their mission and are just going through the motions of doing church, standing on the sidelines and sitting in the pews. The dry bones are waiting, and God is looking for those who will get in the game? Are you available?

- Pray for the Father to renew your desire to get in the game, being willing to go to the hard places.

- Ask the Lord to open your church’s spiritual eyes to see the need to be available for God to use as His instrument.
Ezekiel was not only an available instrument who was willing to be where the Lord wanted, he also exemplified a confident trust in God’s sovereign work. To Ezekiel, it was not about being the best, coming in first or winning the prize — it was about a confident trust in the ways and works of God. He was comfortable to leave the results up to the Lord. The phrase “Lord you know” in verse three shows how Ezekiel realized he could not fix the problem of the dead dry bones. It also shows that he trusted and believed the Lord to do what only the Lord could do in bringing life to the dead dry bones. Because of this trust, Ezekiel could focus his energy on the task the Father had led him to do.

Today, God is looking for followers who will go deep with Him in relationship and trust Him with the results of their service. A few months ago, I helped with the funeral of a dear friend and fellow laborer in Christ. My friend died suddenly of complications related to muscular dystrophy. A number of years before his death, he preached a sermon that became his most favorite to preach. It was based upon Hebrews 12:1-3 but was focused on the phrase in verse two, “fixing your eyes on Jesus.” The title of the message was, “You Don’t have to Finish First to Win.” As a part of the message, he would share some of the struggles associated with his journey and then challenge people with the following truth: Our role as servants is to run with resolve the race God has for us and always keep our eyes and hearts on Him, trusting and leaving any results of our service to Him. In these desperate days, how’s that working for you?

Pray for a confident resolve to trust the Lord with results as you serve Him.

Ask the Lord to revitalize your church’s confident trust that the Lord can still transform your community through His Spirit.
When David Livingstone died, his servants cut out his heart and buried it under a tree. His body was dried in the sun, mummified, returned to England and buried at Westminster Chapel. His reputation as a missionary, doctor, explorer and anthropologist left an indelible mark on Christian missionary efforts and expansion in Africa during the mid-1800s and beyond. Because of his genuine investment and love for the African people, Livingstone was the man God used more than any other to open up southern and parts of central and eastern Africa to the work of Christian missionaries. As a doctor, he cared for people’s physical needs but was always devoted to living and sharing the gospel with patients. As an explorer, he was passionate and determined to open up routes and stations for missionaries to follow to share Christ with the Africans. Through journey after journey, despite many natural, physical, spiritual and emotional hardships, Livingstone literally invested and sacrificed his life so that parts of Africa could be opened up to the gospel. In the text for today, Ezekiel continued his journey with the Lord. The Lord spoke into his heart “again.” Ezekiel had already heard the Lord’s call and was available to listen and respond. Ezekiel had proven himself faithful and was again called upon to hear and respond to the Lord. His life was a life of continuous availability and sensitivity to the voice of God. He had responded before with a complete trust and willingness to go, no matter the cost and no matter the sacrifice. He simply wanted to walk with God in the valley of dead dry bones. So, when God called again with more specific directions and words, Ezekiel was poised and ready to go. What can we learn from Livingstone and Ezekiel? God lays his hand upon those who trust Him and are available and usable — those willing to go again and again, investing their lives in His Kingdom enterprises. Does that sound like you?

- Ask the Lord to search your heart for things that hinder your availability.
- Pray God will have mercy and once again give the American church an opportunity for use through renewal and awakening.
“So I prophesied as I was commanded” (Ezekiel 37:7). Not only is there a desperate need for "available" instruments, but the Lord is also looking for "obedient" instruments. The church in America is struggling today because of a lack of obedience. Ezekiel obeyed the Lord’s voice and prophesied as he was commanded, resulting in a rattling — a coming together of the bones and a mighty army was raised to life. Unfortunately, that’s not happening in America. No matter how desperate it becomes, when revival and awakening sweeps the church, God’s people will began to obey His commands and “echo” the gospel through their lives. We need to pray for “obedient” instruments.
This passage is a testimony to an “obedient” life. Ezekiel, with great confidence and resolve, did what the Lord asked him to do. Ezekiel was an obedient instrument in at least two ways. First, Ezekiel went to the valley of dead dry bones with the Lord. His obedience was fulfilled in his going. This was not something that Ezekiel could dish off to another staff person or fellow laborer. Ezekiel went because this was Ezekiel’s mission. His going to such a desolate location was the direct result of the Lord’s call, direction and work through and in his life. Ezekiel probably would not have chosen this assignment, but that was not the point. God choose it, and thus Ezekiel walked with God in obedience.

Second, Ezekiel’s obedience involved speaking God’s message. The term “prophesied” refers to the “pouring forth” of words through the verbal communication of God’s truth. Ezekiel is not just delivering a message — he is passionately delivering a message from God that he has received, ingested, believes and must speak. Therefore, divine inspiration and imperative is driving Ezekiel’s obedience to proclaim the message (see “Thus says the Lord God” in verse five). What can be gleaned from Ezekiel’s obedience? Obedience to go and speak God’s message will always flow out of an intimate relationship that’s personal and real. When we as believers are walking with the Lord and are receiving His Word from Him, we will go with Him and boldly speak His message. It’s really not about others and their obedience — obedience starts with me. Can that statement be said of you?

Pray for an obedient life of going and speaking God’s message.

Ask the Lord to raise up obedient instruments who will go and speak God’s truth.
In February of 1970, students at Asbury College in Wilmore, Ky., encountered God in revival during 185 straight hours of chapel. Following that encounter, many students who were set free from sin in conversion or renewed in their faith through cleansing became obedient instruments in God’s hand. They began sharing their stories in churches, colleges and Bible schools across America. In a church in Anderson, Ind., while Asbury students shared their stories people flooded the altar. Each subsequent service brought more people and conversions as services continued for 50 additional nights. People of all races and denominations attended as alcoholics were delivered, broken homes healed, and students were converted and commissioned. The Asbury Revival began when one believer, a faculty member, publically shared a testimony of God’s grace and forgiveness in His life and invited others to do the same.

The Asbury Revival is an example of what can happen when believers pray, obey and surrender unconfessed sin to the Lord. But, woe to those who have not surrendered their sin to Christ. The Scripture above points to Isaiah’s message concerning the tragic nature of sin. Sin separates, kills and destroys. Sin also provides fertile ground for a disobedient lifestyle. When believers are gripped in unconfessed sin, the gospel creeps forward slowly through their lives as eternal fruit becomes non-existent. God is unable to hear their prayers and lay His favor upon His people. If that sin-pattern continues, God will draw the line on their sin. Why were the bones in Ezekiel 37 dead and dry? Because God had judged His people and their sin. God thus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and sent his people away in exile. That’s why God says that “sin is very grave” in Genesis 18:20. Sin hinders one’s relationship with God and one’s ability to serve through obedience. It eventually renders believers and churches ineffective and unfruitful. Is sin hindering your obedience to Christ?

**Ask the Father to reveal hidden sin in your life.**

**Pray for the Lord to set your church free in obedience through confession, repentance and cleansing of sin.**
2 Timothy 2:1-2 “You therefore, my son . . . commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”

In 1819 when John Scudder obeyed God’s call to service as a medical missionary to India, little did he realize how his step of obedience would leave a fruitful legacy of the gospel in that country. While on the field his family grew with the addition of 13 more children. Nine children survived to adulthood and seven became missionaries. Eventually — over a span of four generations — 42 Scudders became missionaries. John’s granddaughter became the most famous of all. After reluctantly returning to India to help with her sick mother and assist with the medical mission that her dad was involved in, Ida, through a series of tragic events and many tearful hours of prayer and seeking the Lord, surrendered to God’s call to be a medical missionary. Her accomplishments in India are unparalleled. Ida led Bible studies, started a hospital and the Vellore Medical College for Indian women. She trained nurses and eventually doctors. Ida served faithfully until she retired in 1946 at the age of 72. By then, her one-room practice had grown into a modern medical center with over 100 doctors, a 484-bed general hospital, a 60-bed eye hospital, mobile clinics with nearly 100 attending doctors, while training 200 medical students each year. At her retirement, she was followed by one of her most distinguished students, Dr. Hilda Lazarus. Even after her retirement as director of the medical center, she remained active in helping with difficult cases and investing spiritually in people’s lives by leading a Bible study for 10 more years. She went home to be with Christ in 1960 at the age of 90.

The Scudder family is a modern-day example of Paul’s words to young Timothy in today’s text. The words “commit” and “teach” demonstrate the call of Christ to invest in making disciples who make disciples. It represents a fruitful and obedient life in Christ that invests in the passing on of the faith to future generations. This was God’s call through Paul to young Timothy. And, evidently John Scudder, his son John and his granddaughter Ida did the same. What about you?

Pray toward a life of fruitful obedience, making disciples who make disciples.

Ask the Lord to revive or create in your church a spirit of fruitful obedience to the making of disciples.
When 28-year-old housemaid Gladys Aylward knelt and gave her life to Christ, she had no clue how drastically her life would change. Gladys began to mature in her faith and soon felt God’s call to serve on the mission field. In 1930, she applied to the China Inland Mission (CIM) but was turned down because of her poor academic record. Despite the dead end with CIM, God’s Spirit persisted. Determined to obey God’s call, Gladys continued to save money, prepare spiritually and soon made contact with an elderly widow missionary in Yangcheng, China. Gladys eventually made the journey to the field and settled into the work. Over the next 20 years she shared Christ with muleteers, ministered among and led over 100 children to safety in war-torn China during 1940, served as a spy for the Chinese Army, and ministered as a “Bible-Woman” (Bible study leader and evangelism and charity worker) in a local church in Chengdu, China. After 21 years in China, she returned to England, became a world-known figure who promoted missions (a book, movie and BBC documentary were made about her life) and spoke all over the world for Christ and the cause of missions. This “small woman” of humble beginnings with learning disabilities became one of the most noted single women missionaries in modern history. Making Christ known to the nations — that is where her new life in Christ took Gladys.

As Ezekiel obeyed the Lord’s command to declare His Word to the dead bones, I’m sure he wondered where this step of obedience was headed. Today’s text shows the real reason for Ezekiel’s obedience — that God’s people will know who He is through a deeper and more intimate relationship. The term “know” is from a root that refers to “experiential knowledge” or knowledge that is gleaned from all the senses. God is interested in intimacy and relationship, that His people may know Him deeply as the “I Am” God of the universe who is personal and holy. So too, that is where our obedience as His instruments should be going. God is interested in you knowing Him so that He may make Himself known through you! Where is your faith and service taking you?

Pray for a deep resolve to make intimacy with Christ the main priority in your life.

Ask the Lord to use your church to make Him known among the nations.
I recently attended the funeral of a 97-year-old believer who faithfully served Christ her whole Christian life. She played the piano at her church for almost three decades. She was faithful to her daily walk with Christ, having devotions and sharing her faith with family, neighbors and friends. The last Sunday before her passing, she was worshipping in God’s house. In her later years, every afternoon, she could be found in her chair beside the living room picture window with her Bible and devotionals. She prayed faithfully for family and friends and invested in the lives of the younger members of her family. Testimony after testimony of her Christ-like character was shared from the pulpit and in the fellowship hall the day of her funeral. Aunt Ann had walked with God, and everyone around her knew it — she was “steady.”

David’s reference in today’s Scripture refers to his desire to live (dwell) in the continual presence and nearness of God. The term “dwell” refers to a consistent practice and presence — one that is unhindered and one that is unbroken. Although David at times failed miserably and sinned, his heart was always seeking a life of steady obedience and fellowship with God. That’s why God described David as “a man who was after My own heart, and willing to do all My will” (see Acts 13:22). “Steady obedience” must happen if we are going to “pass the baton” of our faith from one generation to another generation, making disciples that make disciples. Are you steady?

Pray for a steady life of walking with and obeying God.

Ask the Father to mold your family into a family that is “after God’s heart,” doing all His will.
Ezekiel 37:7 “So I prophesied . . . [and] there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling”

During the Second Great Awakening (1795-1842), God used Charles Grandison Finney as a catalytic instrument in His hand. Not only was he a deep thinker and theologian, he was a faithful practitioner and preacher who saw thousands come to Christ through his crusades and ministry of the Word. His impact on the Second Great Awakening and the continued evangelistic thrust of the church over the last two centuries has been catalytic, especially in four major areas.

The first is in the area of personal devotion, holiness and sanctification. Finney regularly drew away from a busy ministry schedule to pray, fast and get alone with the Lord. Finney did this so that he would not become stale in ministry and so that he could go deeper with Christ in His Word. The second area is through Finney’s evangelistic focus as a pastor, itinerant evangelist, writer, college professor and president. He was always about making soul winning the supreme end of his Christian life and service. Third, Finney’s evangelism methods have been used to assist churches and evangelists through the years. This is especially seen in his use of protracted meetings, his invitation methods and his devotion to cooperative evangelism efforts such as citywide crusades. Fourth, Finney’s emphasis on the wedding of practical ministry with the intellectual/academic life has had a lasting effect on leaders and the church due largely to the influence of many of his writings like his Lectures on Revivals of Religion, Systematic Theology and Memoirs.

When Ezekiel obeyed the Lord as an instrument, the results were also catalytic. It began a process that led to: an Army being raised out of dead, dry, scattered bones in a valley (verse 10); the restoration of hope through God’s promise of victory to Israel (verse 12); and the sharing of God’s great hope in Christ, His ultimate victory over sin and death through the giving of the resurrection life in Christ to Israel and the lost world (verses 13-14). This was a journey that began with one obedient prophet and a bunch of dead dry bones that “suddenly” began to rattle and come together. Will you pray desperately for obedient, “catalytic” instruments?

- Ask God to use your life as a catalyst for revival and awakening now and with future generations.
- Pray that your church will be a catalytic instrument in the revitalization of other churches.
SECTION 3

ECHOING THE GOSPEL THROUGH A FAITHFUL SOWING OF GOD’S WORD

“Prophesy to these bones, and say to them . . . hear the Word of the Lord!” (Ezekiel 37:4). Not only had God called and placed Ezekiel in the middle of a valley of dead dry bones, His call was to faithfully proclaim God’s Word to the dead dry bones. Without a word from God, the bones could not live. The same is true today. Without a faithful sowing of God’s Word, revival and spiritual awakening will not take place. There is no rapid running of the gospel because there is a famine of God’s Word in our land. The church in America is in desperate need of a word from God. Our culture needs to hear the Word of the Lord. God is squeezing and judging us, and we desperately need to hear from Him before it is too late. We must pray for God to raise up available, obedient instruments, who will faithfully sow the Word of the Lord!

VIDEO

Walk through Ezekiel 37:4 with an N.C. Baptist leader at the beginning of this section. Video available at prayfor30days.org.
Ezekiel’s mission was clear — proclaim God’s Word to the dead dry bones. Ezekiel’s audience was a desolate, dry and lifeless group of bones. The bones are the “whole” house of Israel and demonstrate three primary effects of God’s judgment on His people. The first is God’s wrath on unconfessed and unrepentant sin. God’s holiness demands judgment on His people who refuse to heed His call to return to Him in repentance and holiness. It is an act of His love and His desire to draw them back in relationship, one that flows out of His holy character. Second, the bones show the extreme nature and impact that God’s judgment can have on His people. The bones are dead, they are very dry, they are scattered and they present a clear picture of extreme devastation. God did this to His people because they had literally become His enemy as they refused to return to Him (see James 4:1-10). Third, the bones represent an avenue or opportunity for God’s glory and name to be made known to the nations. The bones thus represent a hopeless situation that only God can transform.

Ezekiel must declare the “Word of the Lord.” This phrase refers to a prophetic revelation that is dynamic and powerful and has God as its source. The “Word” that Ezekiel delivers is not his, but it is God’s. It does not originate with man, but with God. It is delivered through an available, obedient and chosen servant who has died to self. It is powerful, and it pierces even to joint and marrow, soul and spirit (see Hebrews 4:12). Nothing can stand in opposition to it and in its wake is ultimately found the fulfillment of God’s eternal purposes in Jesus, the eternal Word (Logos). It can awaken and raise dead dry bones to life, and it can change the eternal destiny of a soul in a moment of belief. It is God’s Word for God’s people delivered through God’s messenger — all in God’s opportune (kairos) time. Today, the “Word of the Lord” must go forth if the dry bones are going to be raised to life! That’s why we must speak His Word! Do you have God’s Word, and are you ready to speak it?

Pray that you will be a faithful hearer and sower of His Word.

Pray that your church will be faithful to make God’s Word known in word and deed.
Luke 8:5 “As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds . . . devoured it”

While visiting in the home of a man in the community where I pastored, I experienced first-hand the truth of today’s Scripture. An elderly man had requested a visit. He was in declining health and wanted to talk to a preacher. Up until this visit, the man usually had no desire to talk about spiritual matters, so, naturally, I was excited about the possibilities. When I arrived, I found the man unusually warm and eager to talk. Soon the conversation moved toward Scripture, eternal life and a personal relationship with Jesus. As I shared the truth of Scripture related to the need for him to repent and accept God’s plan for salvation through Jesus’ death on the cross, the man became agitated. The more the truth of God’s Word was shared, the more agitated he became. Then, suddenly, he screamed out, “Leave me alone!” He then asked me to stop sharing and to leave. I was heartbroken because he did not trust in Jesus as his Savior. Two weeks later he died suddenly, and as far as I know, with a hardened heart and without ever professing Christ as Savior.

When Jesus spoke concerning the sowing of God’s Word among people, he said that the Word would often fall upon hearts that were hard (Luke 8:5, 12). The picture in this text is of someone sowing seed that falls upon the trampled and hardened path beside the field. Because of this, the birds (representing the evil one) can come and remove the seed before it is able take root. Three key lessons surface from this text for sowers. First, speaking and sowing the Word of the Lord into hard hearts requires that the sower live with the reality that many may not embrace the truth and reject Christ. Second, the sower must have resolve to faithfully sow the whole truth of God’s Word, trusting any results to God. The seed cannot be watered-down, sugar-coated or changed to fit the hard-hearted audience. Hard hearts also need to hear the truth of God because sometimes, the sowing is more related to accountability and judgment than the producing of fruit. Third, spiritual warfare is real, and those who sow among hard hearts need to be spiritually ready to recognize and deal with it from God’s perspective. Prayer preparation is key, as sowers are dependent upon the Lord to sow with wisdom and effectiveness. How’s the sowing in hard soil going?

Pray for wisdom and resolve to sow the seed of His Word even among hard hearts.

Ask the Lord to give your church a heart to come alongside another church, helping it sow the seed among hard hearts.
Luke 8:6, 13 “Some fell on rock . . . and in a time of temptation fall away”

When the Second Great Awakening swept the western part of America in the early 1800s, many were skeptical of its aberrations, especially the emotional and physical outbursts that sometimes accompanied the beginning of “camp meeting” type gatherings. There were reports of people jerking, groaning, barking and laughing uncontrollably as conviction swept the meetings. Some of these manifestations were simply emotionally charged outbursts from hecklers who wanted to discredit the awakenings with excesses. Others were attributed to sensationalist supporters who wanted to take matters into their hands. Still others seemed to be genuine and passionate responses to the convicting work of the Spirit. Despite the presence of shallow hearts and various emotional excesses, the message of Christ was heartily proclaimed in the camp meetings and the awakening spread like wildfire across Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Georgia.

As with every genuine spiritual awakening, the test of its authenticity is often measured by its ultimate impact upon the moral and spiritual fiber of the culture. George Baxter, president of Washington College in Virginia, while visiting Kentucky during the early years of the awakening called Kentucky one of the most moral places that he had ever been, with a sense of God’s presence being felt everywhere. Some of the seeds of God’s Word had fallen on rocky, shallow soil, but, evidently, most had not!

In today’s text, Jesus demonstrates that there will be times when the sower sows the Word and people will embrace the message, even with joy, but when the genuineness of their faith is called into accountability through trials, temptations or even seasons of prosperity — in those times, their faith will wilt away. The phrase “lacked moisture” in verse six, and the term “temptation” in verse 13, point to a problem with nourishment and depth. The seed has no foundation and source for growth. It cannot grow and mature because it has no way to become rooted and grounded. In this situation, the decision to embrace the Word is not based upon a genuine faith experience and encounter with God but on fleeting human emotions. Do you know anyone with a shallow heart, being tossed about by temptations and trials? How are you going to pray for and help them?

Pray the Lord will grow and mature your heart, guarding you from a shallow faith.

Pray that God will help you and your church identify shallow hearts, pray for and minister to them.
Luke 8:7, 14 “Some fell among thorns . . . and are choked . . . and bring no fruit to maturity”

The American church has a distracted heart. There are many indicators, three of which are primary. First, we have committed spiritual adultery and taken our hearts off the Lord. We have become idolaters and therefore are enemies of God (see James 4:1-6). As Revelation 2:4 says, “You have left your first love.” Church leaders have led the way in this journey with our “rock-star mentality.” I saw a Christian conference advertisement recently that had two different registration fees. One for those seeking general admission, and then one that was higher for those who could have backstage time to “mingle” with the conference speakers and leaders. Who do we think we are? Second, we have set our hearts on self-comfort and sinful pleasures instead of a holy and godly life in Christ. We are a sin-stained church, with behavior patterns that match the pagan culture we are seeking to reach. This renders individual believers and churches powerless, unable to gain a hearing with the lost world because of the lack of integrity both in witness and in a faith walk. Third, we have taken our hearts off of Christ’s mission. For many churches, accomplishing activities, providing church functions and keeping up with the status quo of the latest church fad is the goal. For many believers, life has become all about the travel team, the sports event, the vacation home, the new job or a social event, while church prayer gatherings, disciple-making efforts or mission opportunities take a back seat. Sad commentary, don’t you know?

In today’s text, Jesus says that messengers who faithfully sow God’s Word will have seed that fall on soil that is full of thorns. This refers to people who have received the Word — yet the cares, worries and pleasures of life take priority over their spiritual maturation in Christ. The use of two separate terms in verses seven and 14 for “choke” paint a picture of “suffocation” and “constriction.” The seed literally cannot grow because it is consumed with other things that suffocate and cut off the seed’s source of life giving nutrients. The result is no growth, no life, no fruit and ultimately death. The church in America is headed there, unless the Lord sends revival. Are you distracted?

Pray for a pure, undistracted heart for God’s Word to fall upon.

Ask the Lord to focus your church on Christ and His mission.
Luke 8:8, 15 “But others fell on good ground . . . yielded a crop . . . with patience”

When the seed of God’s Word fell upon lawyer C.I. Scofield’s heart through the bold witness of a client in 1879, it found a former war hero’s heart ripe and ready to receive and produce much fruit for the Kingdom. Scofield’s dramatic conversion was followed by an intense hunger for God’s Word. Scofield soon answered the call to ministry, was ordained a Congregationalist minister and began pastoring in Dallas, Texas. He became a conference speaker and Bible teacher, eventually embracing dispensational theology and producing a study Bible that is still being used throughout the world. Scofield’s heart for the world continued to grow, and through the influence of Hudson Taylor, he answered God’s call to reach the lost on foreign fields. Burdened by the lack of attention being given by American churches on Central America, Scofield led his church leaders to begin Central America Mission (CAM). The first missionary couple was sent in 1891, and by 1894, seven missionaries were on the field. By 1983, nearly 300 missionaries were in seven countries. Today, CAM is called Camino Global, a global missions agency that remains focused on Spanish speakers and has missionaries and missions in countries all over the Western Hemisphere and the world.

In Luke 8:8 and 15, Jesus speaks to the sowing of God’s Word in good soil. This is soil that has been cultivated and has adequate depth, moisture, nutrients and sunlight. In the spiritual realm, this refers to hearts that have been prepared by the Spirit through cultivation, fertilization, watering and sowing of God’s Word. The soil of the heart is “ripe” and “ready” to receive the Word. These texts also point to the need for “patience” while sowing in the fruitful soil. Fruitful hearts are hearts that must depend on the Lord’s timing in the bearing of fruit. It’s not just about bearing fruit, but about God producing fruit in His time and way. Is the soil of your heart ripe and ready to bear fruit? Are you patiently waiting on the Lord’s time to prepare and produce fruit a hundredfold?

Pray for a fruitful heart, asking the Lord to prepare the soil of your heart for patient growth through His Word.

Ask the Father to cultivate fruitful hearts in your church.
DAY 18

CAN YOU HEAR THE RATTLE?

Ezekiel 37:7 “As I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling”

Recently, following the sowing of God’s Word by a speaker in one of our prayer conferences, the Spirit of God moved in hearts, producing a time of stillness among participants. No one moved or wanted to move. You could also hear a few people throughout the auditorium quietly weeping. This went on for about 15 minutes, and then, the “holy hush” was over. Individual testimonies would later bear witness to a deep work of the Spirit reviving, encouraging, cleansing and changing hearts. That’s what happens when the soil is ready, and the Word of God is sown. God rattles and moves hearts that are hard, dry and in desperate need of new life.

The American church has been in desperate need of a rattling for many decades. Robert Coleman, in his book, *Dry Bones Can Live Again*, commented, “For most churchmen, there is no thrill in personal devotions; no spring in the step; no shout in the soul . . .

Complacency is the norm . . . [and] the day of reckoning is sure to come.”¹ In today’s text, Ezekiel knew that he had to obey the Lord and proclaim His Word to His people. Ezekiel had shared the Word of the Lord before — but this time, the response was different. The bones “suddenly” rattled and “came together.” “Suddenly” demonstrates how God usually works when he sends revival and spiritual awakening. He works, prepares, convicts, sows, waters and cultivates and then all of a sudden, He produces fruit, even a hundredfold. The terms “rattling” and “coming together” speak to God’s progressive work in the sowing of His Word. He always builds upon His previous work as His Word never returns void. Today, God seems to be building and “rattling” the bones in the American church toward revival. We are not there yet, not even close, but “suddenly,” it can happen. Do you hear the “rattling?”


Pray that the Lord will “rattle” the dry places of your heart through His Word.

Ask the Lord to prepare the soil of His church in America for a sudden “rattling” through the sowing of His Word.
“Prophesy to the breath . . . son of man” (Ezekiel 37:9). We need God’s manifest presence through His Holy Spirit! Despite the presence of a host of denominational, parachurch and local church ministries, church planting initiatives, evangelism and discipleship strategies, prayer efforts and exciting worship gatherings, the American church seems to have no power and is losing this culture to paganism more rapidly every day. The echoing of the gospel is not taking place because we need new life — life that comes only via a fresh out-pouring of God’s anointing through His Holy Spirit. We must pray, for a fresh moving of God’s Spirit.
For Ezekiel, this was the moment of truth. Ezekiel had obeyed God, he went and faithfully proclaimed God’s Word, the bones rattled, the sinews and skin grew, the bones came together and were now a big group of organized, dead corpses. The task was only half-accomplished. The corpses were missing the main ingredient — God’s breath and presence, His life-giving Spirit (Ruah). I’m sure the temptation was to rejoice in the accomplishment of the day. I mean, to go from dead, dry, scattered bones to organized, put-together corpses — now that’s progress! Something to be proud of, right? Not really!

The problem was alarming because the bones were not yet endowed with the very thing that would move them from death to life. The Lord spoke into Ezekiel’s heart and commanded him to “prophesy” and say to God’s Spirit “come.” The term “come” refers to an imperative action that is dependent on God to accomplish. Transformation is needed physically and spiritually, and only God’s Spirit can accomplish this task as it invades the corpses. Ezekiel’s call is a passionate, desperate heart cry for God’s intervention through His Spirit. Today, the situation is also dire because our greatest need is God’s manifest presence through His Spirit — not His works, blessings or gifts. Verse 10 says, “The breath came into them, and they lived, and stood to their feet, an exceedingly great army.” May this be our heartfelt prayer — come, Holy Spirit!

Ask the Lord for a fresh anointing in your life and witness.

Pray for the Lord to blow the winds of His Spirit in your church, bringing new life and vitality to believers and ministries.
Abraham Lincoln once commented that if he had eight hours to chop down a tree, he would spend six hours sharpening his axe. Lincoln understood the need to prepare adequately for the task at hand. In today’s passage, Ezekiel’s obedience in asking for a fresh blowing of God’s “breath” or “Spirit” prepared the way for a battle-ready army to be raised up. When God answered Ezekiel’s prayer and gave His life–giving Spirit, the army was prepared in at least four ways. First, there was a strong physical life. The corpses were now physically alive and could function with the Lord’s vitality and strength. Second, they were infused with new spiritual life. This was no ordinary army. This was God’s army and He filled them with His presence, wisdom and passion. Third, God “stood” the army to its feet. This represents its readiness for battle. The army was now focused on the mission at hand and is ready, willing, eager and able to move forward into battle. Fourth, it was an “exceedingly great” army. It was not just a small band of soldiers. Instead, it was very large.

The alive, Spirit-infused, “exceedingly great” army described in verse 10 stands in sharp contrast with the dead dry bones described in verses one and four. What was once a very desolate and defeated army with “very dry” bones scattered all over the valley is now a very healthy, large, battle-ready army, prepared by God to join His mission. Today, preparation for the battle through the fresh blowing of God’s Spirit through revival is desperately needed because evil and sin are rampant in both the church and culture at large. Biblical standards are being excused as outdated or old-fashioned, even intolerant. Prayer meetings are often attended only by a few. Churches are having little impact on lostness and seem to be losing their passion for God’s mission. Yet, all that can change when God prepares the way and raises up a Holy Spirit-infused army of witnesses through revival. It has happened before, and it can happen again! But God must do it! Come, Holy Spirit! Come!

Pray the Lord prepares the way for a fresh anointing of His Spirit in your heart and life.

Ask the Lord to do whatever it takes to raise up a living, “exceedingly great army” of witnesses through revival.
When William Taylor was converted to Christ, his life burned hot for the things that mattered most to God — souls. Taylor’s conversion experience reflects the transformational power of the Holy Spirit. His grandmother taught him the Lord’s Prayer and explained that he could experience God’s Kingdom and become a child of God as a young man. This desire began to burn in his heart, and one night, Taylor encountered the convicting power of the Holy Spirit sitting by the kitchen fire. The sobbing was uncontrollable as he confessed every known sin and cried out to God for forgiveness in Jesus. At age 21, Taylor answered God’s call to ministry with the American Methodists and served as a missionary evangelist at many points around the world. His is most noted field of service was South Africa, where he was instrumental in seeing revival come among the Xhosa-speaking people during the mid-1860s. Through his hot-hearted love for Christ and the lost, Taylor preached with anointing and passion, often being referred to as a “Flaming Torch” or “Fire Stick” by many, including the native Xhosas. As revival broke out, Taylor emphasized the powerful transformational work of the Holy Spirit and heartfelt prayer. During a two-year period, the Methodist church increased 40 percent in membership. Those who were converted soon began evangelizing as the revival fires spread to other areas. Taylor’s heart was always burning for souls, as he never allowed the fire of his conversion to be extinguished.

I believe one reason the church struggles with Christ’s mission today is because many who sit in the pews have never genuinely been converted. In today’s text, Jesus shares that to be born physically is one thing, but — if a person is ever going to experience the life-giving power of God through His Spirit and become a part of His Kingdom — that person must be “born anew” by God’s Holy Spirit. This spiritual transformation or regeneration is different from physical life and cannot take place any other way. It is transformation of the heart and soul, through the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. This “conversion experience” results in the life of a person being set aflame for use in fulfilling the purposes of God, just like William Taylor. Can that be said of you? Have you ever been genuinely transformed (converted), and are you a flaming torch for Jesus? Or, has your “hot-hearted” love for Christ and His mission been squelched by sin, hardship, apathy or disobedience (see 1 Thessalonians 5.19)? Questions worth pondering, don’t you think?

Pray for a hot heart for Jesus and His mission.

Ask the Father to restore your church’s flaming heart for reaching the world for Christ through revival.
Following his enslavement at a young age by the Vikings and short stint as a raider and pirate, Olaf of Norway (A.D. 964-1000) eventually encountered Christ and was converted through the witness of a Christian hermit. Following his conversion, Olaf soon became burdened for his native Norwegians and began his mission as a “raider for Christ.” Following his arrival in Norway and through a series of events, Olaf became ruler and king in Norway. Olaf was a bold witness, and often confronted others with the claims of Christ through direct methods. He was known to go into areas and destroy pagan idols while at the same time confronting the followers of Nordic deities with the claims of Christ. He was always willing to boldly make Christ known even if it meant unpopularity, opposition and physical danger. His tenacious witness and success as a leader and follower of Christ allowed him to announce by A.D. 999 that Norway could be classified as a Christian nation. It was certain that no one in Norway had to ever ask Olaf, “Where is your God?”

Today, I wish the same could be said of the church in America. God and His truth are being challenged at every turn. The challenges come from false religions such as radical Islam; a culture that celebrates sin and every sexual deviation imaginable; and governments that include apocalyptic leaders in Iran, to ISIS, to our own leaders in America who legislate with no recognition or reverence for God. These groups and others are saying to American believers and churches, “Where is your God?” In Joel 2:17, ministers are told to weep between the porch and the altar, asking for God’s mercy in restoration and revival because the nations were saying the same about Israel. How do we respond to this questioning of God in America? Today’s text helps us answer this question. We must respond with an honest and sincere faith — one that is confidently seeking with great intensity the “One” who “helps in our weaknesses.” “Help” refers to coming alongside or “taking up with someone” in prayer. Dependence in the “Spirit” through prayer does not start with someone else. Even when we do not know how or what to pray, that’s when the Spirit can do His greatest work in and through us! He’s our Helper and fashions, filters and focuses our prayers! Why do they say, “Where is your God?” Shall we Pray?

Ask the Father to give you a longing for desperate prayer, dependent on the help of His Spirit.

Pray for your church to see the desperate need to unite in deep and heartfelt prayer for the Lord’s Helper.
Acts 13:4 “So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went”

When God pours out His Spirit in genuine revival, believers are sent to the lost world in remarkable ways. Such was the case following the 1857-59 awakening that swept the United States, United Kingdom and spread to various points in the world. In the wake of the 1857-59 awakening, over 2 million people were saved in the United States and United Kingdom alone. Churches and believers were also revived through united prayer gatherings as existing Christian organizations, societies and mission agencies were renewed or started on their missional journeys in new fields. The filtering-down effect of God’s activity in revival would soon produce fruitful hearts for God’s call to ministry and missions. The Keswick Movement began in 1875 with an emphasis on the deeper spiritual life and became a unifying component toward great missional advances. Bible societies also expanded and the YMCA experienced great growth through an influx of young men. D.L. Moody’s ministry with college and university YMCA groups provided a fertile seedbed for missionaries to be called and sent through the start of the Student Volunteer Movement (1886), under John R. Mott’s leadership. Missions like the China Inland Mission (1865), Central American Mission (1890), African Inland Mission (1895) and the Sudan Interior Mission (1893) were started as new converts were called, empowered and sent to foreign fields out of churches, universities, Bible schools and mission societies.

In Acts 13:4, Paul and Barnabas were “sent out” by the Holy Spirit. This term reflects God’s initiative and motivation behind their going. They were literally called, selected and directed by God’s Spirit to go and make Christ known to the world. In the midst of a prayer and worship encounter with God, the church at Antioch became an obedient launching pad for the missional call of God to be worked out through Paul and Barnabas. That’s what can happen when believers and churches pray, fast and experience the manifest presence of God through revival. That’s what can happen when the Holy Spirit invades dead dry bones, and an army is raised to its feet and thrust into the world. Think we need the empowering, sending Spirit today? Come Holy Spirit! Come!

Pray for a willing heart to be sent to the nations.

Ask the Father to revive your church’s desire to fast, pray, give and be a launching pad for the Holy Spirit to send missionaries to the world.
When Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf (1700-60) started the 100-year prayer vigil at Herrnhut, Germany, in 1727, the Moravians were ensured a spot in history as being greatly used of God in pioneering the modern missionary movement. As God would have it, many of the Moravians who powerfully encountered God in the prayer gatherings were called to put feet to those prayers and go to the world as missionaries. Two young men, John Dober and David Nitschmann, sensed God’s call to share Christ with the slaves in the West Indies. Their initial plan was not only to go, but also to sell themselves into slavery and live among the slaves sharing Christ. This was not permitted, but they eventually set sail in 1732 with permission to work in their trades and live among the slaves, using their earnings to provide support for the ministry among the slaves. God used this mission endeavor tremendously as other Moravian missionaries joined the efforts for the next 50-plus years. Over that period of time, the Moravians planted churches on neighboring islands such as Jamaica, St. Johns, Antiqua, St. Croix, St. Thomas and others and saw thousands of slaves commit their lives Christ.

In today’s text, Ezekiel declares the Lord’s promise to dwell in and revive the dead dry lives of His people. God’s desire was not only that they be revived, but that they would experience His presence. The term “in” describes the indwelling work of the Spirit of Christ through relationship. God not only demonstrates His love for the world in Jesus, but He also takes the initiative to “dwell” or “tabernacle” with a lost world through the coming of Christ (see John 1:14). In this act of sacrificial and incarnational love, we have demonstrated the limitless bounds that motivate God’s heart to redeem and grant life to a lost humanity. When the Lord pours out His presence through His Holy Spirit in a believer, He is “in” them, motivating them toward obedience in the mission, no matter what the cost — even if it means being willing to become a slave to reach a slave! Are you there? Come, Holy Spirit! Come!

Pray that your heart will long for the Lord’s unbridled presence to flow through your life.

Ask the Father to give your church a hunger to encounter Him in a new and fresh way through prayer.
SECTION 5

ECHO THE GOSPEL THROUGH A RENEWED HOPE

Ezekiel 37:11 says, “Our bones are dry and our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” God’s people were discouraged, in survival mode and all hope of restoration and new life had vanished. They felt like God had abandoned them and did not care about their future. Ezekiel was therefore sent to help Israel see their devastating circumstances from God’s perspective. Ezekiel was a true messenger of hope. Today, things do not look too promising morally or spiritually in America. And, there is no doubt that God is chastising and judging His people and our country. In the midst of this, many believers and churches have lost their way because their hope for change has diminished. Like Israel, we need to see these times from God’s perspective and pray for a renewed hope through God’s manifest presence in revival.

VIDEO

Walk through Ezekiel 37:11 with an N.C. Baptist leader at the beginning of this section. Video available at prayfor30days.org.
Ezekiel’s message to God’s people is very different from their understanding of their situation. Their hope has been extinguished by exile and hardship. Yet, Ezekiel’s perspective is God-centered and not man-centered. Ezekiel’s message of hope reaches beyond the present to the promise of God’s deliverance through the resurrection, new life and the redemptive work of Jesus. It was very late for those in exile, and the consequences of their sins were weighing heavily upon them. Yet, even in the midst of those difficult days, the message of God’s hope and deliverance still comes through Ezekiel. This hope toward new life provides encouragement and resolve for God’s people to press on — despite their overwhelming circumstances.

When God’s people hear and embrace His message of hope in any hopeless situation, two things take place in their hearts. First, they are encouraged in their present journey. Circumstances that seemed overwhelming are no longer that way. Things might be bad, but because of God’s message of hope, things are not as bad as they seem. Israel felt that the Lord had abandoned or cut them off, but they have a new perspective on their plight because they have heard a fresh word from their God promising His intervention and deliverance. Second, they experience resolve and confidence to press on with a renewed vigor. This is no longer their fight, it is the Lord’s, and He is the one providing the resources for restoration and new life. God said through Ezekiel, “I will open your graves.” Therefore, their hope is built upon His promises and abilities. Today, it is evident that the American church needs the encouragement, resolve and vigor that comes from a renewed hope. Remember — it’s not too late — but it’s very late. Shall we pray?

Pray for the Lord to give you a renewed hope in Him.

Pray for your church to awaken to the reality that it is not too late but very late.
During the 1904-05 Awakening in America, which was a part of the Global Awakening of 1901-10, the Holy Spirit moved mightily, calling people to prioritize their lives toward extraordinary prayer for revival and awakening. As reports of revival and awakening were shared, people became hopeful and began to earnestly desire awakening. In Chicago, prayer meetings began to spring up at noon. A group of ministers organized a daily gathering at a central location for ministers and lay leaders. It is reported that these gatherings were powerful times of heartfelt prayer for revival and awakening. In 1905, in Denver, Colo., in preparation for a series of evangelistic campaigns that were scheduled, churches were filled at 10 a.m. for prayer. At 11:30 a.m. on Feb. 20, the mayor requested that stores close to allow people to attend prayer meetings. In addition, schools closed, and even the state legislature postponed a vote so that people could go to prayer gatherings during the noon hour. Four theaters were filled to overflowing with over 12,000 people attending, crying out for an awakening. In Portland, Ore., over 200 stores agreed to close their doors from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. to allow customers and workers to attend prayer gatherings across the city. The urgent hope of God in revival and awakening filled people’s hearts, stirring them to seek the Lord in prayer for revival, awakening and for the lost. They had an urgent hope that changed their everyday lives and priorities.

In today’s passage, Jeremiah shares how hope was birthed in his heart as he recalled a desperate situation in his life through the lens of the Lord’s mercies that were poured out toward Him (see verse 22). Therefore, because Jeremiah’s gaze was on the Lord, hope was stirred up in His heart. That is what happens when people unite in prayer — they focus their hearts on the Lord and hope is birthed. Today, despite the presence of increasing evil, apathy and moral/spiritual collapse in our culture, we as believers have not yet become desperate enough to do whatever it takes to change our routines and seek the Lord with all our hearts in prayer (see Joel 2:12). We do not have an urgent hope for the Lord yet — but maybe we will, someday, before it’s too late.

Pray that the Lord will give you an urgent heart to prioritize prayer for revival in your life.

Ask the Father to grip your church’s heart with an urgent hope for awakening.
Marie Monson believed that God could bring awakening anywhere He desired — even in China. She prayed earnestly as God filled her heart with hope through trials, the study of God’s Word, and testimonies and accounts of revivals in other mission fields. The year was 1927. Marie and other missionaries from across China were gathered together in Chefoo because of political unrest. While waiting, the group assembled together for prayer, testimonies and the reading of God’s Word. Marie was a Norwegian Lutheran missionary and quite bold in her faith. She declared God’s desire from His Word for personal holiness through the forsaking of all sin. Charles Culpepper and his wife, both Baptist missionaries, were present along with Bertha Smith and eight other missionaries. Charles’ wife, Ola, suffered from optic neuritis and sensed that the Lord wanted to heal her. The missionaries gathered and started to pray, but Bertha Smith stopped the group and confessed an unforgiving spirit toward another missionary. Then the group continued their praying. Heaven came down, Ola Culpepper’s eyesight was restored and the Shantung Revival was started in the hearts of those missionaries.

In today’s text, Paul reminds believers that a genuine hope only comes from the Lord. He is the one that births the kind of hope in believers’ hearts that stirs them to faithfully seek Him for change. The term “abound” points to a hope that cannot be contained or measured — it is above and beyond our circumstances and ability to fully comprehend. This kind of hope keeps our heart fixed on Christ. Marie Monson and the other missionaries eventually went back to their fields, but were different. Their resolve to mobilize prayer for awakening was stirred because of a “believing hope” that the Lord was sending revival. He had started revival in their hearts, and He would continue it through them. That was their hope! Do you have a believing hope for revival and awakening?

Pray for the Lord to give you a believing hope for revival.

Ask the Father to use your church as an instrument of believing hope and prayer for revival and awakening.
Lamentations 3:26 “It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord”

The cost of taking Christ to China has been great. It has also taken many centuries. Beginning with the Nestorians, the Jesuits and the Protestants, thousands have died through persecution and disease on Chinese soil. Despite certain missional efforts and revival movements that had encouraged the work through the years, Christianity still had not made a large impact upon the country as a whole as late as 1950. Many missiologists were discouraged by the lack of results as China slipped into a period of isolationism from about 1950-70. Then, after 1970, the world began to hear of a rapidly multiplying church that was estimated at 5 million in 1980. Today there are approximately 100 million believers in China with an estimated 30,000 people professing Christ daily. If the movement continues, China will soon become the nation with the largest population of believers in the world. What a drastic change — one that has come by a patient hope through faithful praying, sacrificing and persevering believers through the years. Now, with an exploding church, China is being used by the Lord to take Christ to the world. I imagine saints like Lottie Moon and Hudson Taylor are rejoicing in heaven at how the Lord has multiplied His work in China through the patient hope of believers who never gave up on reaching China!

In the spiritual realm, waiting is a necessary element that allows the Lord to accomplish His redemptive purposes in and through His people. Jeremiah says that waiting on the Lord’s salvation or deliverance is “good.” To “wait” refers not only to a season in time but also to one’s silence and disposition while waiting. Coupled with the term “good,” this text points to a state of contentment and blessing while exercising unwavering dependence upon God to accomplish His work. This is “good” with the believer because he is resting in God’s sovereign timing, presence and provision. It is also “good” because of the witness this produces to a faithful Lord. But even more, it is “good” because it pleases God. How’s the waiting going? Are you still hopeful and patient while you wait on God to move through spiritual awakening?

Pray that the Father gives you a patient hope in Him for revival.

Ask the Lord to use your church as a witness to His patient hope for transformation and awakening in your community, nation and world.
As a parent and grandparent, I am constantly reminded that I need to be careful when I promise to do something because little ears and hearts are counting on me to keep my promise, no matter how large or small it is. Many years ago, I did not keep a promise to a pastor friend. We had agreed to meet for lunch to discuss a revival meeting in a town that was halfway between our two church fields. I even placed it on my calendar. That day came and I was working in the office, studying and preparing a sermon. It was close to noon and suddenly, the phone rang. It was my friend. He asked me, “Is everything OK?” I said, “Fine, how are things with you?” He said, “I’m good and enjoying my pizza here in Durham.” Then it hit me — I was supposed to be there with him. I felt terrible. My pastor friend was fine and forgave me, but I did (and still do occasionally) get ragged over that slip-up.

The people of Israel were in desperate need of hearing a hopeful Word from God. Ezekiel, God’s messenger, delivered hope through three promises from God. First, he delivered hope by the promise of new life through the resurrection (“open your graves.”) Second, he delivered hope through the promise of His manifest presence and power in their lives (“put My Spirit in you.”) Third, he brought hope through the promise of His complete restoration to bring them back to the Promised Land. The three promises together represent God’s promise for complete redemption and restoration for Israel in and through the Christ. Often, our hope in man’s promises will fail us — but never God’s. His hope is a promised hope that cannot fail! Are you standing strong in God’s promised hope found in His Word?

_ask the Father to give you His promised hope for this day._

Pray that leaders in your church will hope and trust in God’s promises to impact lostness in your world.
Then

Ezekiel 37:14 “Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it”

When Mount St. Helens erupted in May of 1980, a cataclysmic wave of water and debris changed the surrounding landscape suddenly and dramatically. The total energy output of the blast was equivalent to 400 million tons of TNT, which is approximately the same as 20,000 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. In just six seconds, 150 square miles of forests were stripped and toppled. Scientists have since studied the phenomena associated with this explosive and sudden eruption, gleaning many insights about its impact and powerful force. Months before the blast, steam pressure began building in the mountain, creating a huge bulge on the northern face. Then, when an avalanche took the rock face off the mountain, there was nothing left to hold back the pressure. Suddenly, the mountain exploded and a wave of water and debris rushed down a river basin, rapidly eroding the soil with such force that it created stratified layers of geological formations similar in appearance to those found in the Grand Canyon. To this day, scientists consider the Mount St. Helens eruption one of the most powerful and significant geological events of the last century.

The hope that Ezekiel shared with Israel was a promised hope that was not yet completed. The final chapter would be completed at a later point. The hope they experienced and looked to can be seen in the use of the word “Then.” The term points to a time and place in the future when God would intervene and deliver. It would happen when God determined and to the measure and degree that He desired. Israel’s role was to walk with and experience Him throughout the process, watching and praying toward the “Then.” When God reveals Himself in revival and spiritual awakening, unprecedented and even cataclysmic spiritual change and blessings can occur suddenly, powerfully and quickly. The lost are suddenly open and hungry for Christ. Believers and churches are suddenly broken over sin, cleansed and sent on mission. In revival and awakening, the Lord prepares the way, often working behind the scenes, cultivating hearts, churches and cultures and “Then!” — wow! Are you looking and praying toward God’s next “Then?” I am!

Pray for a strong hope in God’s next “Then.”

Ask the Father to kindle in your church a real hope for revival and awakening.
REPRODUCING GOSPEL LIFE IN OTHERS

2 TIMOTHY 2:2
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