

Bones Can Live

He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.” (Ezekiel 37:3)

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1–7

Song: “Revive Us Again”

One of my favorite vacation spots is Cades Cove, Tennessee. I enjoy driving around the loop, looking at wildlife, and visiting the old homesteads. Some of the most intriguing places to me are the old churches. I love walking through the cemeteries, imagining the stories of those buried there. How many bones must lie under these sacred grounds? I have visited many cemeteries, but I have never experienced bones coming together and springing back to life. If they did, I would be gone in a heartbeat!

In a vision, Ezekiel saw what you and I never have. He was among the exiles taken captive to Babylon after King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah. Although Ezekiel reminded the people why God was disciplining them, he also gave them hope. God would return them to their promised land and provide a new temple.

When God breathed life into these renewed skeletons, they came alive. The same happens spiritually when we accept Jesus’ forgiveness for our sins and commit our lives to obeying Him. Like the wind, God’s Spirit blows through our souls, and we begin to live in a way we have never experienced before.

Father, may I experience the renewed spirit that comes through a relationship with You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

November 24–30. **Martin Wiles** is a Christ-follower who is also a teacher, pastor, editor, author, husband, father, and grandfather. He has authored seven books and numerous publications.

The Spirit Brings Life

“I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it,” declares the LORD.”
(Ezekiel 37:14)

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:8–14

Song: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

My wife and I own a resurrection plant. When my wife first showed it to me, I wondered why anyone would want one. It appeared dead. Then she demonstrated why the plant has its name. When watered, it slowly unfolds from its dead-ball shape and comes alive.

Things also appeared bleak for God’s people. Perhaps Ezekiel got caught up in their misery. Captivity was God’s discipline for their disobedience, but hope lies in their future. God would renew their spirits again and breathe life into them as He did in the vision of the dry bones.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told His followers that He would send the Spirit to indwell them. This initially happened on the Day of Pentecost, but now it happens whenever someone trusts Christ as Savior. God’s Spirit gives life for our spiritual journey by giving us wisdom to make good decisions, strength to overcome temptations, and passion to do God’s work. He also gives us peace in all our circumstances. Like those dry bones, God’s breath resides in us and gives us life.

Father, remind me daily that Your Spirit gives me life and then gives that life meaning. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

God's Invitation for Satisfaction

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? (Isaiah 55:2)

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1–9

Song: “Satisfied with Jesus”

My wife and I received a wedding invitation from a couple who occasionally visited our church. We attended, and what a fancy gathering it was! Golf carts escorted us from the reception building near the parking lot to the little chapel in a converted barn. When the ceremony ended, the same carts took us to the reception building for a catered meal. All this down a long country road in the middle of nowhere!

God also issued an invitation through Isaiah the prophet. He invited His people to turn from their rebellious ways and be satisfied with obeying Him. Otherwise, the people in the southern kingdom of Judah would face the same consequences as their northern neighbors: captivity. Sadly, the Israelites didn't learn their lesson and kept seeking satisfaction in the wrong things.

Sometimes, like the people Isaiah addressed, we do the same. But true satisfaction and joy can only be discovered in Christ, and we can use the gifts and talents He gives us to serve others. This relationship also ensures that we can experience peace regardless of our circumstances. Only Christ can bring satisfaction. Let's accept His invitation gladly.

Father, help me to look for satisfaction in nothing else but my relationship with You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Timing Is Everything

“You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” (John 7:8)

Scripture: John 7:2–10, 37–39

Song: “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

It was a 45-minute drive from our house to work. It seemed logical for my wife and I to buy a house halfway between work and where we currently lived, since this would also put us halfway between our parents’ homes. We contacted a realtor, picked a home, and began the process. But one roadblock after another cropped up. We no sooner got one issue resolved when another raised its ugly head. One day, as I sat at my desk, God urged me to pay attention to the stop signs He was erecting. I called my wife and told her what I felt, and we agreed to stop the process. Only later did we understand why it was not the right time.

Jesus’ brothers also wanted Him to step out of God’s timing. At this point, they didn’t believe in Him. But Jesus refused. He lived His earthly life on a divine timetable and would not deviate from it, not even to please His family.

The adage “Timing is everything” has many practical applications but none more relevant than in our spiritual journey. Making plans is fine, but we must do so under the direction of God’s Spirit. God’s plans for us are for our good and His glory, but we must follow His timetable, not ours. Make sure that what you want is what God wants for you—and when.

Father, give me the wisdom and patience to follow Your timetable. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A New Norm

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

Scripture: Revelation 21:1–7

Song: “When We All Get to Heaven”

COVID-19 ushered in a host of new norms—some good, some not so good. One new norm my wife and I enjoy is sitting in our home, ordering items from our favorite stores, and having them delivered to our house—sometimes within minutes! No more battling the crowds. No more searching for parking spots. No more waiting in long checkout lines. Another advantage of the new norm relates to meals. If we don’t want to eat out, we can now use several delivery services that bring hot meals right to our front door!

As the aged apostle John suffered banishment to the island of Patmos, God also introduced him to a new norm—but in a vision. John saw a new earth and heaven beyond his imagination, as the old things had passed away.

For those who have faith in Christ, that new norm is coming. Everything wrong on this earth will be made right again—restored to God’s original design. No more sickness, disease, crime, abuse, broken relationships, death, or abandonment. We will bask in a new norm in God’s new heaven and earth for eternity. We will finally embrace the peace and joy God has always intended for us.

Father, help me to live with eternity in mind. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

The Curse Will Be Gone

And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. (Revelation 22:2–3)

Scripture: Revelation 22:1–5

Song: “Jesus Is Coming Soon”

Newton Monroe was the unluckiest man Andy Griffith and Barney Fife had ever met. Monroe sold a little bit of everything from the trunk of his car—he was a traveling salesman of sorts. But everything Monroe sold seemed to fall apart—including the mink fur Barney bought for his girlfriend, the transistor radio Gomer purchased, and the watch Floyd was unfortunate enough to get stuck with. Initially, Andy assumed Monroe sold stolen goods, but he didn't. He was just unlucky . . . maybe even cursed.

According to the Bible, so is humanity. Since Eve ate fruit from the forbidden tree and passed it along to Adam, sin has infiltrated the human race. No matter how hard we try to be and do good, we fail. We miss the mark. We stumble from God's path. We long for a better time and a better us, and the good news is that it's coming.

John pictures a different tree—probably symbolic—but one from which eating removes the curse instead of bringing it. In the new heaven and on the new earth, God will remove sin's curse. No more of the evil and unpleasant things we now endure. God will be the light, and where His light is, darkness cannot inhabit. One day, the curse will be gone. Good will win.

Father, help me to rejoice daily because a new day is on the horizon. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

The Living Water

“Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:12)

Scripture: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12

Song: “I Will Sing the Wondrous Story”

When I hiked and backpacked regularly, water was a necessity. I might carry flavoring to put in my water, but without water, the flavoring was useless. On longer trips, I always made sure to camp where a water source flowed or bubbled nearby. I needed the water for drinking and cooking meals. I also needed it for the next day’s hike. All of life depends on water. Without it, we perish.

In the beginning, God placed Adam and Eve in a garden with water sources. Sin, however, corrupted the source. Ezekiel pictures the end of time when, once again, God will provide a water source that will bring continual healing to all who dwell with God in eternity. The water source will be so deep that it will never run dry.

In John 4, Jesus tells the woman at the well that He provides living water. If she drinks from Him, she will never thirst again. The same holds true for us. Jesus provides forgiveness, peace, fulfillment, and eternity. He is the living water that quenches any thirst we have. When we drink from Him, satisfaction will gush through our souls like a raging river.

Father, may I always find my fulfillment in You and no other source. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.