



#### Lesson 4: The Rattling of Bones – Partnership and Mutual Care

- **Theme:** "How do we renew our strength and passion?"
- **Bible Connection:** *The bones come together and are covered with flesh (Ezekiel 37:7-8)*
- **Key Element:** Prioritizing the Health of the Shepherd and Congregation

*"So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them..." | Ezekiel 37:7-8*

God tells Ezekiel to prophesy, and as he does, there's this rattling sound. Bones are coming together, tendons are stretching out, muscles are forming, and skin is covering it all up. It's a beautiful picture of restoration, **starting from the inside out**.

Revitalization is more than a fresh coat of paint. It's not a quick fix or a surface-level touch-up. God doesn't start with the skin. He goes straight for the bones, the very core of who you are. He's about to do a deep work in you!

**Notice the order.** When God restores, He starts with the bones, then the tendons and muscles. The Spirit begins far below the surface and works His way out ... and heals our skeletal fractures.

- **BONES:** Maybe our church family has some fractures we didn't even know about. Disappointments, hurts, dried up passion, diminished strength. God starts restoration by strengthening our core—both individually and collectively.
- **TENDONS:** Then He moves to the tendons—those connections between what we believe and how we live together. Ensuring our actions line up with our faith and our partnership with each other.
- **MUSCLES:** Then come the muscles—our spiritual disciplines, our habits, the things that give us strength for the journey together.
- **SKIN:** And finally, the skin—how our community sees us, our outward impact and ministry.

#### THE STATE OF THINGS

As Zeke prophesies ... **the condition** of these warriors changes quickly and dramatically! When we say "condition," we're talking about the state of things, the way things are right

now in our lives and in our church family. In the context of Ezekiel's valley, the condition was dry bones - total lifelessness. But condition isn't just about what you see.

**Our condition is our reality, not our potential.** It's where we are, not where we're headed. But listen—**our condition is not our conclusion!** The condition in the valley was death, but God's plan was life. In our lives, our condition might be burnout or discouragement, but God's plan is renewal. Our condition might be isolation, but God's plan is partnership and community!

So when we talk about "condition," we're getting honest about our starting point as individuals and as a church family. We're admitting where we really are so God can take us where we need to be together.

## **The Reality of Life's Challenges**

Let's be honest about where many of us find ourselves:

**Physical Condition:** Maybe you're running on empty, burning the candle at both ends. Your body's screaming for rest, but you're pushing through on caffeine and determination. You're like those dry bones—no vitality, no energy, just going through the motions.

**Emotional State:** Perhaps you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or disconnected. You're trying to pour out to others, but you're running on emotional fumes. Remember Elijah? He went from a mountaintop victory to hiding in a cave (1 Kings 19). That was his condition, but it wasn't God's conclusion for him.

**Spiritual State:** You might feel dry, disconnected, or spiritually dehydrated. Worship doesn't move you like it used to, Bible study feels routine, prayer feels difficult. That's a reality many of us face.

**Here's the thing:** acknowledging our condition isn't about beating ourselves up. It's about being honest with ourselves, with God, and with each other. It's saying, "Lord, this is where I am, but I know it's not where you want me to stay."

## **The Challenge of Carrying Burdens Alone**

Here's what we've learned: **We were never meant to carry life's burdens alone.** Whether you're a church leader or a church member, God designed us for partnership and mutual support.

Look at the Apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 11**. After describing all his physical hardships—beatings, shipwrecks, dangers, and deprivation—he identifies what weighed most heavily on his heart: ***"Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."***

Paul's greatest burden wasn't external persecution; it was the internal weight of caring for God's people. This reveals something important: **leadership is meant to be shared, not carried alone.**

## **Our Calling to Partnership**

**Ephesians 4:11-12** reveals God's design: *"Christ gave gifts to the church: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."*

This isn't about hierarchy—it's about **partnership**. Pastors aren't called to do all the ministry; they're called to equip us to do ministry together! **Acts 6:1-4** shows this partnership in action:

- **The Problem:** Apostles were overwhelmed with both spiritual leadership and practical needs
- **The Solution:** The congregation selected qualified people to handle specific responsibilities
- **The Result:** *"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly"* (Acts 6:7)

**When everyone operates in their calling, the Gospel advances.**

## **RESURGENCE QUESTION: "How do we renew our strength and passion together?"**

When we're talking about renewing our strength and passion, we're not just talking about individual improvement. We're talking about **collective restoration**—a church family that supports each other and shares the load of ministry.

**When church members and leaders are healthy together, energy is contagious—people are excited to serve and invite others.**

Here's what happens when we partner together effectively:

### **1. Shared Burdens Become Lighter**

*"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2)

When we support each other—members supporting leaders, leaders supporting members, members supporting each other—the weight of ministry becomes manageable and even joyful.

### **2. Diverse Gifts Create Stronger Ministry**

Every person brings unique gifts and perspectives. When we work together, we accomplish far more than any individual could alone.

### 3. Mutual Encouragement Fuels Passion

When we're isolated, we lose energy. When we're connected and encouraging each other, passion multiplies.

**Regardless of Your Current State here's what we all need to remember:**

#### 1. Be Honest About Where You Are

Don't minimize struggles or exaggerate strengths. God meets us where we are, not where we pretend to be.

#### 2. Recognize You're Not Meant to Do This Alone

Whether you're thriving or struggling, church life is designed for partnership and community support.

#### 3. Commit to Personal Health

Your spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being directly impacts your ability to serve effectively and support others.

#### 4. Embrace Your Role in Church Health

You have a part to play in creating a healthy church environment for everyone.

### MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The goal isn't perfection—it's **partnership**. It's creating a church family where:

- **Leaders feel supported** rather than overwhelmed
- **Members feel equipped** rather than just entertained
- **Everyone contributes** according to their gifts and calling
- **Burdens are shared** rather than carried alone
- **Celebrations are multiplied** through community

### Personal Assessment and Partnership

In just a moment, we're going to work through an honest assessment of where we are individually and how we can better partner together. This isn't about judgment—it's about **awareness and action**.

Some of you will discover you're in a better place than you thought. Others will realize you need more support than you've been receiving. Both discoveries are valuable because they help us know how to move forward together.

**What matters most is what we do next.** A healthy church happens when healthy people work together in partnership, supporting each other and sharing the load of ministry.

Whether you're struggling in the valley or thriving on the mountain, God has a role for you in creating a church where everyone can flourish.

### **The Promise of Partnership**

When we get this right—when we truly partner together as a church family—something beautiful happens:

- **Energy multiplies** instead of depleting
- **Vision becomes shared** instead of isolated
- **Ministry becomes sustainable** instead of overwhelming
- **Growth happens naturally** through genuine community
- **Joy returns** to both serving and belonging

**This is what God intends for His church—not a one-person show, but a symphony of gifts working together in harmony.**

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### **Transition to Workbook Session**

*Now let's turn to page 20 in our workbooks. We're going to work through the personal assessment together, honestly evaluating where we are in different areas of life. Then we'll explore how we can better partner together as a church family. Remember, this is about building each other up, not tearing anyone down. Let's discover how God wants us to support each other in this journey.*