



## Lesson 5: The Breath of Life - Empowerment

- **Theme:** "What ignites our ministry potential?"
- **Bible Connection:** *The breath enters the bodies (Ezekiel 37:9-10)*
- **Key Element:** Mobilizing Your Collective Strengths

*Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the **breath**; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, **breath**, from the four winds and **breathe** into these slain, that they may live.'"* | **Ezekiel 37:9**

Ezekiel is prophesying, he is preaching the Word of God, and by the time he finishes his sermon, the valley is full of restored warriors. But **verse 8** declares there was **"no breath in them."** They have form, but no breath. Flesh, but no breath.

*"Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; **Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.***

This is the moment when structure becomes life, when potential becomes power, when the church transforms from an organization into an organism!

## THE RUAH OF GOD

The native Eskimos of Alaska have about fifty different words to describe snow? They've got words for fresh snow, packed snow, drifting snow, you name it! And here in the Midwest, we're not far behind when it comes to rain. We've got drizzle, mist, fog, showers, downpour – we're practically rain connoisseurs!

In the Bible, we've got this powerhouse word – **Ruah**. It's like the Swiss Army knife of Hebrew words, and it's powerful! In our English Bibles, we see it translated as **"spirit," "wind,"** or **"breath."** But it's so much more than that. It's the very essence of God's power and presence! The words 'Breath' and 'Breathe' mentioned in **Ezekial 37:9-10** is the word **Ruah**.

Sometimes in the Old Testament, you'll see "**Ruah Elohim**" – that's the Spirit of God! Or "**Ruah Hayyim**" – the breath of life! This isn't just some gentle breeze we're talking about. This is the divine breath that fuels our passions and animates our very existence!

When God breathed into Adam, **that was Ruah**. When the wind parted the Red Sea, **that was Ruah**. When the Spirit came like a rushing wind at Pentecost, you guessed it – **Ruah!** We're talking gale-force, tent-ripping, flood-bringing wind! It's the kind of wind that'll mess up your hair, your plans, and your whole life – but in the best way possible!!

So, when we talk about **Ruah in our churches**, we're not just talking about a nice, comfortable spiritual experience. We're talking about the raw, untamed power of God that can take a valley of dry bones and turn it into an army!

Sometimes God's restoration doesn't look like a day at the spa. Sometimes it looks like Jacob, wrestling all night, walking away with a limp but also with a new name and a new purpose. It's that **Ruah** that ripped through creation, turning chaos into cosmos. And guess what? It's still ripping through today!

And here's where it gets real for us, church. We've got people in our pews right now with talents, gifts, and anointings that are lying dormant like those dry bones. It's our job, as leaders, to breathe life into them! **We need to be the conduit for God's Ruah!**

## **RESURGENCE QUESTION: WHAT IGNITES OUR MINISTRY POTENTIAL?**

The question today is ... how do we leverage the assets already in our church? How do we 'wake up' our ministry potential? Let me give you three steps to resurrect the gifts and stir the calling in your congregation:

### **1. See Beyond the Bones**

We must look past the current condition of our people. That person who seems hopeless or unusable? God sees a warrior! We've got to have eyes to see potential, not problems. We've got to train our eyes to see like God sees.

Remember when Samuel went to anoint the new king of Israel? He was ready to crown Jesse's eldest son based on his appearance. But God said, "Whoa, hold up!" The Lord told Samuel, ***"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).***

**Here's the lesson: We can't overlook anyone in our crowd, there might be a king disguised as a shepherd.** Let that sink in! When David was called in from the fields, he probably smelled like sheep. He wasn't dressed for success; but under that shepherd's cloak was the heart of a king, the soul of a psalmist, and the courage of a giant-slayer.

Max Lucado nailed it when he said, *"God sees us with the eyes of a Father. He sees our defects, errors, and blemishes. But He also sees our value."*

See, we can't look at folks in our congregation to simply see what is – we must see what could be! That shy teenager? Potential worship leader. That recovering addict? Future counselor. That elderly widow? Prayer warrior in the making!

But let's take it a step further. That person who comes in late every Sunday, slipping into the back row? They might be our future youth pastor. The off-key singer in the second row? They might have the gift of encouragement that'll transform our community. The quiet janitor who keeps to himself? He might have the wisdom of Solomon locked up inside.

We know Moses was a stutterer, Joseph was a dreamer sold into slavery, and Peter was just a rough-around-the-edges fisherman. But God saw beyond their current state to their divine potential. **Proverbs 20:12** says, ***"Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both."***

Let's ask God to give us His eyes to see and His ears to hear the potential in every single person in our church. I am setting out a challenge today ... with God's help we are going to look at people with fresh eyes. God to help us to see beyond the surface, and beyond the bones to find the kings disguised as shepherds! To see the prophets masquerading as wallflowers, and the apostles hidden in plain sight.

Because when we start seeing people the way God sees them, that's when dry bones start rattling, that's when flesh starts forming, and that's when the breath of God starts blowing through our church!

## **2. Speak Life**

Just like Ezekiel had to prophesy to those bones, we've got to speak life, confidence, and faith into our people. Our words have power, so we must use them to call out the gold in others! **Proverbs 18:21** tells us, ***"The tongue has the power of life and death."*** We can use our words to breathe life!

Beth Moore puts it this way: *"Every person you see was created to be a champion in something."*

It's our job to call that out! To speak to the potential in our people, and not just their present. We will prophesy to our own dry bones! We will tell our insecure single mom that she's got the strength of Deborah. We will remind our doubting Thomas that he's got the faith to move mountains. Our words can be the very breath of God in someone's life!

### 3. Create a Ruah Environment:

We need to be a church committed to be a place where God's wind can blow freely. That means being open to change, embracing the uncomfortable, and expecting God to move in powerful ways. Paul tells us in **1 Thessalonians 5:19**, "**Do not quench the Spirit.**"

Francis Chan challenges us: *"But God doesn't call us to be comfortable. He calls us to trust Him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in trouble if He doesn't come through."*

Let's create a church culture that's expectant, open, and hungry for God's move. That means being okay with messy services, unexpected testimonies, and divine interruptions. It means fostering an environment where people feel safe to exercise their gifts, take risks in faith, and yes, even fail sometimes.

#### **Let this sink in deep: Nothing truly transformative happens until God breathes on us!**

We can have all the programs, all the strategies, all the best intentions in the world, but without the Ruah of God, we're just rearranging dry bones. It's God's breath that brings life, that ignites purpose, that sets our souls on fire for His kingdom.

The best news of the day - God is eager to breathe on us! He's not holding back. Just as He commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath, He's inviting us to position ourselves, our ministries, our church, to receive His life-giving Spirit. It's time to break out of our comfortable routines and create space for God's wind to blow through our congregation.

What does this mean for us? It means we need to be people of **expectation** and **preparation**.

1. **We prepare** the atmosphere through prayer, worship, and obedience.
2. **We expect** God to move in powerful ways, to awaken gifts, to stir up callings, to breathe life into every area of our ministry.

And when that breath comes - and it will come - be ready for everything to change. Because when God breathes, dry bones don't just come to life - they become a mighty army.

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### **Transition to Workbook Session**

*Now let's turn to pages 26-27 in our workbooks. We're going to work through the "Don't Bury Your Potential" exercise and the Ministry Identification Assessment. This is where we begin to identify and activate the gifts and callings in our church. Let's discover what God has already placed within us that's waiting to be awakened.*