

DRY BONES

Walt Disney was a remarkable man of vision. He never gave up. Early in his career a newspaper fired him because they thought he had "no good ideas". That just made Disney try harder. When he was starting out in Kansas City he couldn't sell his cartoons. Some hinted that he had no talent but Walt Disney had a dream so he set out to conquer his foes. He found a minister who paid him a small amount to draw advertising pictures for his church. Disney had no place to stay, so that the church let him sleep in the mouse-infested garage. One of those mice which Disney nicknamed Mickey, became famous -- as the world knows.

The early days were tough; but that remarkable, creative visionary refused to give up. Walt would occasionally present some unbelievable, extensive dream to his board about an idea he was entertaining. Almost without exception, the members of his board would gulp, blink, and stare back at him in disbelief, resisting even the thought of such a thing. But unless every member resisted the idea, Disney usually didn't pursue it. Yes, you heard me correctly. Unless everyone RESISTED the idea he would not take it. The challenge wasn't big enough to merit his time and creative energy unless they were unanimously in disagreement! Is it any wonder that Disneyland and Disney World are now realities? This type of faith is required for visionaries in business – but also for us as Christians. Like Disney we need to dream big and trust in God for the impossible.

The Israelites were in an impossible situation. They had been conquered by a foreign nation. Their cities had been burned to the ground, the temple had been destroyed and the entire nation had been exiled into captivity. All hope seemed lost. Yet God still had a plan. In the midst of this impossible situation God reminded the people through the prophet Ezekial that He is the God of the impossible.

Ezekial 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones . 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry . 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, `Dry bones , hear the word of the LORD! 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" 7 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. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. 9 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 from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet -- a vast army

1. SEE the Bones – impossible situations

When was the last time you faced an impossible obstacle. Do you remember that feeling of hopelessness?

Years ago I was at Moody Bible College. A couple of guys wanted to have a pickup game of basketball. We went to the Solheim Center and were getting ready to play when a guy came up and asked if his group could play us. We said sure, thinking they were out of shape hacks like us. They turned out to be the farm team for the Chicago bulls. We truly were grasshoppers before them!

Ezekial is taken by the Lord to a valley filled with dry bones. The bones represented the Israelites. As a people they had been conquered, their cities had been destroyed and they were in exile. All hope and any chance of life as normal was long gone.

Does history offer a more ridiculous picture than this? Here is hopelessness incarnate. Who ever had such a dumb audience? Preachers deal with possibilities, prophets with impossibilities. Isaiah had seen this nation full of wounds and putrefying sores; but disease had galloped on to death, death to disintegration, and now these disjointed bones spell out despair. Written over the whole situation in large letters is I-M-P-O-S-S-I-B-I-L-I-T-Y" -- Leonard Ravenhill (Why Revival Tarries)

Dry bones is as dead as you can get. Ask a doctor and they will tell you there are different levels of death. Death occurs when the heart stops. Often the heart can be restarted and the person brought back to life. Then there is brain dead. The body may have some autonomic response but there is little hope of recovery.

But this is different. This is LONG dead. The body is not just dead – it is gone! These are not bones still moist with decaying flesh but the emphasis is that the bones were VERY DRY. It is one thing to believe God for a miracle to heal the sick or maybe even to raise a person who has just died. Remember the story of Jesus when Lazarus died. Martha had held on to hope for a few days but then gave up. She had told Jesus “if only you had been here then”. This is hope lost for more than just a few days. Maybe God can raise the ‘just’ dead, but can even God raise dry bones to life?

Situations in life can be like that sometimes can't they. There may be issues in your life that seem difficult at present but you are trusting in God to get you through. However, as time goes by these situations grow worse. Still there might be hope that they will be resolved. Over time hope fades and at some point dreams die within you and become hopeless situations. Like these dry bones.

God asks, “Son of man, can these bones live?” Ezekial can only reply "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." His answer is hopeless despair.

Are you facing any “impossible” situations in your life. Are there any dry bones you are facing. Things that seem just absolutely hopeless. Dreams that have long since died and been buried within you. When you think about a way through that situation all you can come up with is “I don't know”. Friends can help you talk about it, counselors can help you deal with it, but only God can bring a solution and restore hope.

2. SPEAK to the Bones – hearing God's voice

Ezekial is told to prophesy to the bones saying “Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!”. When most people think of prophecy they think it is like fortune telling or standing out on a street with a sign that says “end of the world near – repent.” Prophecy simply means hearing God's voice and repeating what He has said. It is speaking God's words for a particular time, place and person.

Wouldn't you have felt a bit funny talking to dry bones? I heard the story of a woman who went to a public washroom. As she was in the stall she heard the woman in the stall beside her say “hello.” Moments later the voice said again “hello, is anyone there”. The woman politely replied “hello – yes I am here”. The voice asked “are you coming over this afternoon?” The woman was shocked by the question and asked “Who are you? Do I know you?” The woman in the next stall was silent and then whispered “Frank, I'll call you right back. There is some crazy lady talking to me in the next stall.”

With Bluetooth headsets these days I can't count how many times I have seen people talking to themselves and thought how weird it was. Talking to yourself or inanimate objects is not normal.

We need to speak into hopeless situations the will of God. This is not simply speaking OUR will or wishful thinking but speaking the will and WORD of God to our impossible situations.

There are 2 words used to mean WORD in the Bible. God uses these 2 ways to speak to us today:

a. The first is the word LOGOS

A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term LOGOS in around 600 B.C. to designate a divine reason or plan. In the Bible it is used to speak of God's will or plan in the general sense. Jesus was described as the Word of God in that He was the fulfillment of God's plan in physical form.

The Bible is God's word. It outlines God's will and plan for each of us. When we speak the scriptures into a situation we are declaring God's will. For example, as we look at the world around us today it is easy to become discouraged. The needs of the millions around the world who do not know Jesus can be overwhelming and the tasks can seem too great.

Speaking the Word of God means declaring that God has already said that one day every nation would hear and receive and that one day people from every tribe and nation will be before God's throne in heaven. The job will get done – we know it because God has said it.

b. The second is the word RHEMA

The Greek word RHEMA means that God speaks a specific word to a specific person for a specific purpose through His Holy Spirit. An example of this can be seen in Acts 16:

Acts 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

This passage does not mean that God did not want Asia to hear the gospel. The LOGOS word says in the Great Commission to go and preach the Gospel to all nations. This did not mean that message had been retracted. This RHEMA word simply meant that for that time God wanted Paul to go to that place - Macedonia. It was a specific word for a specific situation.

When God reveals His will and plan to us we need to speak those words into the impossible situations in our life. What is God asking you to say to the situation you may be in right now. What would you He say to you after "Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ...".

It is interesting that the bones coming to life took 2 stages. First he was told to speak and the bones were made receptive to life. Second, he spoke and life was breathed into them. I believe this is God's plan for reaching the unreached nations as well. We need to pray that God would make people receptive to his Word. That spiritual eyes would be opened and that hearts of stone would become hearts of flesh. Then we need to pray that God's Spirit would come and breath into them so that they would come to Christ and be truly brought to life.

Religious instruction, however sound, is not enough by itself. It brings light, but it cannot impart sight. The assumption that light and sight are synonymous has brought spiritual tragedy to millions. The Pharisees looked straight at the Light of the World for three years, but not one ray of light reached their inner beings. Light is not enough. The inward operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary to saving faith. The gospel is light but only the Spirit can give sight. -- A.W. Tozer

Has there ever been a time in your life when the LOGOS or RHEMA word of God came and changed your life? I know there have been times in my own life when God spoke just the right words at just the right time and everything changed.

Fred Craddock was vacationing in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. He and his wife were seated at a table when an old man came up to them and asked, "How are you doing? Are you having a good time? Are you on vacation?" "Yes," said Professor Craddock. "We are on vacation and, yes, we're having a good time." "What do you do for a living?" the old man said. Professor Craddock wanted to get rid of the man so he said, "I'm a professor of preaching." He was sure that title would drive off any unwelcome intruder but it didn't. "Oh, you're a preacher!" the old man said. "Let me tell you a preacher's story." Before he could object, the old man had drawn up a chair to the table and started to unwind his tail.

He said, "I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was and that was very hard for me. The boys at my school had names they called me and they made fun of me all the time. When I walked down the main street of our little town, I always felt that people were staring at me and asking that terrible question, 'I wonder who's the father of that little boy.' I spent a lot of time by myself and didn't have any friends. One day a new preacher came to town and everybody was talking about how good he was. I had never gone to church before. But one Sunday I thought I'd go hear him preach. He was a good preacher so I kept going back. Each time I would go late and I would leave early so I wouldn't have to talk to anyone else. Then one Sunday I got so caught up in the preacher's message that I forgot to leave. Before I knew what was happening he had said the closing prayer and the service was over. I tried to get out of the church but people had already filled all the aisles and I couldn't get past them.

Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. When I turned around, that big tall preacher was looking down at me and asking, 'What's your name, boy? Whose family are you? Whose son are you?' When I heard that question I just shook. But before I could say anything, he said, 'Why, I know who your family is! I know whose son you are. There's a distinct family resemblance. You're the son of God.'" He said, "You know, mister, those simple words changed my life." The old man got up and left. A waitress came over and asked, "Do you know who that was?" "No," said Professor Craddock. The waitress said, "That's Ben Hooper, two term governor of Tennessee."

3. Believe what GOD SAYS about the Bones - nothing is impossible for Him

With God valleys of dry bones become armies of righteousness. Impossibilities become possibilities. There is nothing that God cannot do.

When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God. There are no hopeless situations. There are only people who have grown hopeless about them. -- Charles L. Allen

God said that He would act, and He did:

Ezekial 37:12 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 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."

What word is the Lord speaking to you today. What "grave" is the Lord going to bring you up out of through that word?

A family had a cat that was run over by a car. The mother quickly disposed of the remains before her four-year-old son Billy found out about it. After a few days Billy finally asked about the cat. "Billy, the cat died," his mother explained. "But it's all right. He's up in heaven with God." The boy thought for a moment and then asked, "What in the world would God want with a dead cat?"

Don't be like this boy and limit what God can do. Think big thoughts and dream big dreams. God has a plan for your life and He wants to use you. Maybe it's time to awaken some of those dreams which have been within you. Take God at His word, step out in faith and remember that God is a God of the impossible.

Cynicism is cancer of the spirit. The bad cells of hopelessness attack the good cells of the spirit and, if undiagnosed, will eventually destroy the soul -- Fred Smith

The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

When Walt Disney World in Orlando ,FL. opened in 1974, Mrs. Disney was sitting beside Walter Cronkite. Walt Disney has passed away a few years earlier. Walter Cronkite wanted to say just the right thing to Mrs. Disney, so he leaned over to her and said, "Wouldn't it be great if Walt were here to see this today." Mrs. Disney wisely replied, "If Walt had not first seen this you would not be seeing it today