



Devotional Tools: **DailyWalk**

Daily devotionals for the week following April 9–10, 2011

Monday, April 11, 2011: *Dry*

Daily reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

It's a riveting story, this vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. Ezekiel is speaking to a people in despair not long after the fall of Jerusalem. The people are deeply distressed, feeling like they're dead, without a future. As Ezekiel looks out over this vast devastation, God asks him, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel responds, "O Lord God, you know." He's probably thinking, of course they can't. God commands Ezekiel to preach to the bones, to speak words of life into utter death. There are lots of dry places all around us and inside of us. Let Ezekiel's words speak hope into your dry places today. You will live again. Ask God to breathe new life into you.

Tuesday, April 12, 2011: *Impossible?*

Daily reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14 again

The vision jolts our imagination. Ezekiel is brought to a valley filled with the bones of dead humans. Thousands upon thousands, in every direction. Dead. There is no life here. Scattered over the desert floor, the dry bones have baked in the sun; no moisture whatsoever is left in them. There's nothing but death in this place! A valley filled with dry bones and hopelessness! Can these bones live? There's no way; that's just impossible! But as Ezekiel begins to speak God's word, something utterly impossible begins to happen: death begins to show signs of life. In 11-14, we witness God's power restoring people's lives, bringing hope to the hopeless, giving strength to the weak, announcing life to the lifeless and resurrection to the dead. What's on your long list of impossibilities? As you pray today, ask God to bring signs of life where there's only been death.

Wednesday, April 13, 2011: *Ezekiel*

Daily reading: Ezekiel 36:24-28

This story reminds us that each of us can be an Ezekiel for someone else. Like Ezekiel, we've been given the message of hope, and we're called to speak it. Like Ezekiel, we stand with family and friends at the edge of each valley of dry bones, and God asks us to speak life into those we know and love. Who do you know who's hurting? Maybe it's your son, daughter, husband or wife; a friend or colleague, a coworker or neighbor who's staring into the abyss of hopelessness. Ezekiel 36 tells us that we will receive a new heart and a new spirit. We are cleansed in the waters of baptism. Our heart of stone is turned into a heart of flesh. "You shall be my people and I will be your God." Can you be an Ezekiel for someone else, and speak words of hope into their lives? Ask God to guide you to the right person.

Thursday, April 14, 2011: *Unbelievable?*

Daily reading: John 11:1-45

The raising of Lazarus is the most dramatic and provocative sign in the Gospel of John: Jesus is Lord and master of life and death, and proves it by bringing Lazarus back from the grave. The story of Lazarus is about resurrection. It's about Jesus raising a dead man from the grave; it's about all things being possible with God; it's about believing the unbelievable. It's about robbing death of its sting

and power. It's also a little story with a big lesson. While Lazarus' name appears on the marquee, these verses tell us much more about Jesus, his power, his upcoming experience with the grave and God's power over it, than it does about Lazarus. Unbelievable? In your faith life, is this promise of the resurrection of the body believable? Ask God to increase your faith so you can more fully believe what seems unbelievable.

Friday, April 15, 2011: *Resurrection!*

Daily reading: Romans 6:5-11

Here is a strong word of resurrection: God will make a way where there is no way. At some point the word will arrive; the right word at the right moment. It will be a word spoken, a thought expressed, a paragraph read, a prayer uttered under the breath, that will somehow reach down underneath you in a way that you thought completely impossible, and it will begin its work of slowly lifting you up. The promise of resurrection can bring you to a place of utter surprise. Thomas Merton called this an encounter that liberates something in us, a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life, a resilience, an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated, a capacity to grow and change, a power of creative transformation. It's that place in each of our lives where we begin once again to believe the unbelievable. Resurrection! Life after death after life! Where do you need a resurrection promise? Ask God to breathe fresh resurrection life into you each day.

Saturday, April 16, 2011: *Life*

Daily reading: John 6:35-39

In the scope of John's Book of Signs, chapters 2-12, the story of Lazarus pulls together a number of strands that have already been put in place. Themes of light and life have been important since chapter 5. The giving of life is an important ingredient in John 5:19-47. Twice (5:25, 27-28) John states that those who are dead and hear Jesus' voice will come out from the tomb. John 6:54 illustrates Jesus as the bread of life: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day." Abundant life, here and now, is directly connected to resurrection life because it begins now. John calls us to recognize Jesus as life, now and throughout eternity. Do you really have "life"? Ask God to give you life, and to make you more alive every day.

Sunday, April 17, 2011: *Light*

Daily reading: John 1:1-14

Jesus was there at the creation of all things. In him, the living Word is life, the light to everyone. Life and light are dramatically connected. This living Word became flesh and lived among us. "Light and life to all he brings; risen with healing in his wings." The familiar Christmas carol says it well. In Jesus, light and life come together and offer a promise of resurrection to all who live amid dry bones and death. Jesus puts flesh on bones that have been dry and dead for too long. Jesus opens the tomb, and we step out of utter darkness into his glorious light. Where do you need the light of Christ? Ask God to be the light that enlightens you.

Devotional Tools: SeniorWalk

Senior devotionals for the week following April 9–10, 2011
Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45



Many of us are uneasy about death. Its date is unpredictable, its process is unknown, what follows is mysterious. Yet we know it will happen to every one of us.

The people of Israel are so stuck in their enslavement, in their exile, in their foreign surroundings, that they are feeling dead. Even though they go through their Jewish rituals, they perhaps believe that God no longer cares for them and won't come to their rescue. They may hear the prophets' words, but don't see any evidence. Just like the people of Israel, we are tempted to believe only what we can see, and forget that God is our resource.

What does it feel like when you lose hope? What causes this? How does your hope get renewed? How can your faith in God sustain you, and help you to help another? What qualities does a spiritual leader or prophet possess?

God leads his prophet Ezekiel to a dry valley full of dry bones because God wants to show Ezekiel that hope is not dead, that God can do the unbelievable for humankind. God alone is the source of life and breath, connecting the bones, putting flesh on them, and breathing life into them. Ezekiel witnesses a miracle, energizing his mission to preach hope to his people.

In John's Gospel, Jesus uses Lazarus' death to provide evidence of resurrected life. He alone could do the unbelievable, and restore faith in God's awesome promise.

I remember a time long ago, when our children were small, and all four of them were deathly ill at the same time. My husband was out of town on a work assignment, and we had just been transferred to another city and state. So my resources for help were limited.

I remember feeling that God was with me and had not abandoned me, but I struggled to find energy and solutions to improve the health of my children. One thing was for certain: I did not dare sleep and miss a cry for help.

I consulted a new doctor for more advice. I kept warm soup available to spoon-feed each child. I gave warm baths for comfort, and offered my big bed to the younger ones. In time the healing began, and I was reminded of resurrection life, and words of hope. My husband was shocked when he learned what we were going through.

Lord God, help us to believe in life after death, in hope after despair, in a better future when we are in crisis. Give us the faith to trust you in good times and bad. Let us be a conduit for your love, grace, and mercy to the people around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.