

Running with **VISION**

*“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it”*

- Habakkuk 2v 2



Session #3: VISIONS OF LIFE

Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones

Ezekiel Chapter 37

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

If we are seeking after New Testament Christianity today, pursuing a biblical vision for the church is essential. Yet vision is not merely a case of conjuring up new ideas to combat spiritual malaise. Nor should it ever become a knee jerk reaction to the need of the hour, the whim of the people, or the constantly changing culture.

David once exclaimed “*I saw the Lord always before me...*” (Ps. 16v 8). Biblical vision is just that: constantly looking for the Lord to lead with a passion to be in His presence, a desire to serve His purposes and an expectation that He will always make the difference. When we genuinely *look unto Jesus*, faith starts to rise, vision forms and the road becomes clear. Ironically, *pursuing biblical vision* requires not so much that we come up with a new way of doing things, but that we return to the paths already found in Scripture, and rediscover their rewarding route.

In this new teaching series we will be ***Running with Vision***, looking at what happens when God grants heavenly revelation to His people. Each week we will study a specific God-given vision from the Bible and apply some key questions: *What was happening at the time? What was the vision like? What was God saying to/expecting from His people? How should Christians respond today?*

As we explore this collection of God-encounters, the aim is to see how these amazing visions communicated God’s purposes to people who so desperately needed to embrace them at the time. May we also seek to be obey the heavenly vision of all that God reveals to us, that we might pursue a brave, biblical vision for our own lives and church in this generation, embracing all that Jesus intends for us today.

Running with VISION #3: VISIONS OF LIFE

David famously talked about walking through the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23: But such valleys are not only reserved for those faced with physical mortality. **In Ezekiel 37, the prophet was given a valley view reminiscent of David's.** As telling as it was terrible, the valley before him was indeed a place of death, with no sign of life and much reason to mourn. With the ever-present Lord by his side, **Ezekiel followed a funereal route around the lifeless remains of a once living thing. Yet it was not a person that he mourned, but the desperate demise of the nation of Israel.** In this prophetic picture, Ezekiel saw a corporate carcass: having turned away from God, all that now remained of Israel's once vibrant national life was bare bones.

The vision in this passage is one of warning but also of promise. Amidst the desolation of death, Ezekiel is given a vision of life – a tantalising glimpse of what might be and of how it can come to pass. God's people can know great privilege and prosperity under His guiding hand, but unless they are willing to consistently commit to His ways and surrender the sinful self-will, it can slide away all too easily.

There are times when, like Ezekiel, the Lord would have us look “to and fro” surveying reality. Remember the call to the churches in Revelation? They were told to hear what the Spirit was saying to them. **Having surveyed the scene and prophesied into it, Ezekiel was then reminded that ultimately only the work of God brings life.** As God breathed His life-giving Spirit back into the barrenness, it suddenly brought life. There is hope in the valley! God promised a return of territory, prosperity and identity to His people. But only by way of the word and the Spirit can such things can be realised.

As we survey the spiritual state of things nationally, locally and personally, we must look to the Lord to lead us through times of declension: Christians do stumble and once strong churches can falter as God-given vision fades and the traditions of men set in. **However hard things might appear, however lifeless they seem, we must retain this vision of life:** Where God's servants are willing to be obedient, where the word is spoken clearly and where God's Spirit is welcome and demonstrably active, life and vitality can be restored among God's people. When we, like Ezekiel, run with this vision of life, the evidence of spiritual nourishment, maturity and blessing become clear.

Read: Ezekiel Chapter 37 verses 1-14

- The Drought that leads to Death: v1-2
- The Question that leads to Vision: v3
- The Road that leads to Life: v4-14

Running with VISION:

Discuss:

- *Why is this vision so provocative in describing Israel's plight?*
- *What are the spiritual signs of decline or drought in a church?*
- *What are the signs of spiritual vitality in a Christian / Church? List some things that should characterise a healthy church.*
- *Are you in danger of running dry? If so, where and why?*
- *Why weren't Ezekiel's words enough to raise an army? What impact did the word on its own make?*
- *What difference did the breath/God's Spirit make in Ezekiel's vision?*
- *What is the main lesson we should take from this passage?*

Pray:

Confess any areas of your life that have run "dry" spiritually. Ask the Lord for fresh streams of living water to flow and welcome the Holy Spirit's lead where He has not been allowed to lead before.

Respond:

Do you have a vision for spiritual growth? What is it? Write down anything that is threatening this in your life. What is your daily strategy to maintain spiritual vitality and avoiding drying up?