



## STORY 43

# The Valley of Dry Bones

## EZEKIEL 37

### BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Ezekiel 37.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1  
Read

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### THE BIG PICTURE

*Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}*

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are called the major prophets because they wrote big, or major, books. Isaiah wrote *before* the evil Assyrians took over Israel and led them into exile far away from home. Jeremiah wrote *as* the bad Babylonians captured Judah. And Ezekiel wrote *while* God's people were in exile in Babylon. The book of Ezekiel describes six visions (or special dreams) he had over twenty years. The six visions talk about three big ideas: God's judgment on Israel, God's judgment on the other nations, and God's future blessings for Israel. The blessings are covered in the final chapters of his book. Chapter 37 records one of the most amazing visions in all the Bible: Ezekiel sees a valley of dry bones. What is that all about? We'll have to wait and see. But I'll give you one little hint. Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel had a tough job. He had

2  
Teach

to announce the bad news that judgment had come to Israel because of their sin. But he also had a wonderful job because he got to preach the good news of God’s saving them from their enemies and the even better news of a brand new world that was coming. What does a valley of bones have to do with God’s good news? Let’s listen and find out.

## TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

## TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

**Big Truth**  
God has power  
to raise the dead  
to life.

Did you dream last night? Do you remember your dream? Was it about a monster living under your bed? Your teeth falling out? Getting lost in the supermarket? Having a crocodile chase you? Lots of your dreams can be scary! Ezekiel had something like a scary dream. (At least it started out scary.) The Bible calls Ezekiel’s dream a vision, a special time when God shows something about the future.

One day, Ezekiel writes, “the Spirit of the LORD . . . set me down in the middle of the valley,” and that valley was “full of bones” (Ezek. 37:1). It was like going to an old graveyard, except the skeletons were not in their graves! The dry bones of dead people were scattered everywhere. They were so dried by the hot sun that if you stepped on them, they might shatter. God asked him, “Do you think these lifeless, dry bones can come to life?” Ezekiel shrugged his shoulders, “I have no idea. Only you know, God.” Deep down he may have doubted that they could come to life. But he didn’t doubt the power of God’s word. So, next, when God told him to talk to the bones, he obeyed right away. He prophesied, “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD . . . Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews [or “muscles”] upon you,

and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD” (37:4–6). And do you know what happened? There was a strange sound. The bones started to rattle and to come together, forming people. And for each and every person the foot bone connected to the leg bone, the leg bone to the knee bone, the thigh bone to the hip bone, the hip bone to the backbone, the backbone to the neck bone. Then, from nowhere, muscles started to grow on the bones, followed by skin. Finally, the breath of life rushed into them. They were alive! An “exceedingly great army” (37:10) stood before Ezekiel. The dead were raised to life!

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

*Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}*

Why did God give Ezekiel this strange vision? It wasn’t to give him an idea for a scary skeleton costume to wear to a haunted house. But it was to give him a message for the house of Israel. The dry bones represented Israel, driven from the land because of their sin. But just as the dead bones came back to life, God was letting his people know that he would keep his promise. God promised, “I will give you a new heart. I will put my Spirit within you so you will obey my rules. I will take you home to the place I promised Abraham. I will make you one nation with one king—a king like David. I will save and cleanse you from your sins, and make with you a covenant that lasts forever. You will always be my people, and I will always be your God” (see 36:26–28; 37:21–26). As sure as the dead bones came to life, God would keep these promises.

The vision also shows us how Jesus, the promised king like David, saves you and me. Like those dry bones, we are spiritually dead. But when God speaks his powerful word and sends his Holy Spirit, he breathes new life in us—just like he did for the bones! We were dead in our sins; God has made us alive with Christ (see Eph. 2:5). Through faith in Jesus we are raised from death to life!

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### DISCUSS THE STORY

*Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}*

- 1. QUESTION:** Did Ezekiel give good or bad news, or both, to Israel? Since Israel was in exile, far from home, why did they need to hear good news? How would the good news encourage them?

**TAKEAWAY:** Ezekiel told Israel they were in exile because of their sin, but he promised God would bless them and bring them safely home.

2. **QUESTION:** Can you take a pile of dust and create a person? How did God create Adam and Eve? How did God make the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision come to life? What does that tell us about God?

**TAKEAWAY:** The dry bones came to life because God’s word has power to create and his Spirit gives life.

### Memory Verse

I will put my  
Spirit within you,  
and you shall live.

EZEKIEL 37:14

3. **QUESTION:** When God says that we are “dead in our sin,” what do you think he means? If we can’t live in a way that pleases God without his help, what should we do? How does God help us live for him?

**TAKEAWAY:** We are spiritually dead because of our sin, like Israel, and we need God’s word and Spirit to make us alive.

4. **QUESTION:** When God promised that he would bring Israel back to the land, how did he describe the king that would rule over them? Who is the forever King? How does this picture of dead bones rising from the grave remind you of Jesus? How does it remind you of what Jesus does for you when you follow him?

**TAKEAWAY:** Jesus is the promised King, who saves us from our sin, gives us new life, and brings us safely home.

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## ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from [TheBiggestStory.com](http://TheBiggestStory.com), or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

### Option 1: Steal the Bone Game

*Supply List:* two “bones” (popsicle sticks, dog bones, rolled-up newspapers, etc.), masking tape

*Before Class:* Gather supplies. Place two “bones” in the center of the playing area, and mark off two lines with masking tape.

Divide children into two teams. Assign each child a number so that each team has a player with each number. Have the teams line up on opposite sides of the room. Call out two numbers. The children on each team with those numbers run to the center, grab a “bone,” and try to get back to their line without being tagged by the children representing the other team. If a player crosses his or her line with a bone without being tagged, his or her team gets a point. If a player gets tagged while carrying the bone, the opposing team gets a point. Continue to play—being sure to call all numbers at least once—until one team reaches a set number of points and is declared the winning team. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

### **Option 2: “Ezekiel, Ezekiel, Where’s Your Bone?” Game**

*Supply List: chair, popsicle stick*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Set one chair in the front of the room so a person sitting on it would be facing away from the group. Place a popsicle stick “bone” under the chair.*

Have children sit behind the chair. Choose one person to be “Ezekiel” and have that person sit in the chair and close his or her eyes. Tap one of the children, and have that child quietly take the bone from under Ezekiel’s chair and hide it in his or her lap. Have everyone say, “Ezekiel, Ezekiel, where’s your bone? Somebody took it from your home.” Ezekiel can then turn around and has two chances to guess who took the bone. If the child guesses right, he or she continues to be Ezekiel. If he or she guesses incorrectly, the person who took the bone gets to be the new Ezekiel. Continue to play until many have had the opportunity to be Ezekiel and hide the bone. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

3rd–5th

### **Option 1: Dry Bones Skeleton**

*Supply List: rolls of white masking tape (one per team), large black garbage bags (one per team)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut a slit in each garbage bag so a child could put his or her head through it.*

Divide the children into teams of three to five members. Give each team a roll of masking tape and a garbage bag. Have one child from each team volunteer to be the skeleton and put on the garbage bag. Explain that the goal is to work together to place tape pieces on the garbage bag to represent a human skeleton

as accurately as possible. Give teams 5 minutes to complete their skeletons. When the 5 minutes are up, all teams must stop working. The leaders will then determine which team has the most accurate skeleton. The team with the best skeleton wins the game. Remind children that God brought dead bones to life.

### **Option 2: Dry Bones Relay Race**

*Supply List: two colors of paper, scissors, straws (one per child), buckets/boxes (one per team)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out a small bone pattern on colored paper (one color for each team). Make sure there are an equal number of bones of each color and at least two bones per child. Spread the paper bones randomly around the play area.*

Divide children into teams and assign each team a bone color. Give each child a straw. Tell the children that they must use the straw to suck up their team's bones and carry them back to their team's bucket/box. They may not touch the bone with anything except the straw. When the leader says "Go!" all children can begin collecting bones. The first team to retrieve all of their bones wins the game. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

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## **CRAFTS**

*Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}*

**K–2nd**

### **Option 1: Cotton Swab Skeletons**

*Supply List: white crayons, black construction paper, cotton swabs, liquid glue*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut cotton swabs into various lengths. Print a picture of a skeleton, and place one on each table. Make a sample craft. Write the verse so the class can see it for copying.*

Give each child a piece of black construction paper and have them use white crayons to write the following on the paper: Ezekiel 37:4 "Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." Set pre-cut cotton swabs and liquid glue on each table. Have children glue cotton swabs to the black paper to form a human skeleton, using the provided picture as a reference as needed.

## Option 2: Bones Necklace

*Supply List: thin string, pony beads, white straws, scissors*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut straws into various lengths (cut enough for each child to make a necklace). Cut pieces of thin string about 24 inches long (one per child). Make a sample craft.*

Set straw pieces and pony beads on each table. Give each child a piece of string. Explain that the straw pieces represent bones. Allow them to make a necklace by stringing the straw pieces and beads in the pattern of their choice. Help children tie the two ends together when they are done with their necklace. Remind the children that our God is awesome. He can take dry bones and make them into a living person! When they wear their necklaces, it can help them to remember that God can breathe life into us and change us too.

3rd–5th

## Option 1: Handprint Bones Craft

*Supply List: paper (white and skin-toned colors), pencils, scissors, toothpicks, glue*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Memory Verse on the top of a sheet of paper—one sheet per child (“I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live.” Ezekiel 37:14). Make a sample craft.*

Give each child a verse paper. Allow each child to choose a separate blank sheet of paper that they think best represents their skin tone. Set scissors, toothpicks, pencils, and glue on each table. Have children trace one of their hands onto the skin-colored paper with a pencil. Then have them cut out the handprint and glue it to the Bible verse paper. Children should glue toothpicks to the handprint to resemble bones.

## Option 2: Cotton Swab Skeletons

*See Above*



Visit [TheBiggestStory.com](https://TheBiggestStory.com) for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.