

"Are Your Bones Dry?" – January 29, 2017
By Wayne J. Schneider – Credo in unum Deum

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Ezekiel 37:1-14

Research indicates that everyone dreams, and we average between three to five dreams nightly. Some dreams last only seconds while others can last up to twenty minutes. The sequence of feelings, ideas, and visions are all involuntary. The study of dreams is called oneirology and involves examining the subject and purpose of dreams.

Our dreams are like a release device, that ease the strain on our brain we accumulate during our days. You may have wondered why our pleasant dreams are so short and unmemorable, while our awful dreams stick with us. You might have to check with Freud or Jung for that! Regardless, our dreams deliver a message.

Ezekiel the prophet had a vivid dream, and it's meaning is applicable today as it was in ancient Jerusalem and Judea, in the midst of their Babylonian imprisonment. Ezekiel stood in the Valley of the Dry Bones, and the details are imprinted in his brain. He tells us there is a large number of bones, and they are all dry as donkey dust.

God prompts the prophet, and he preaches to these bones the news that God is going to give life back to them. It's the real deal, too. Not just flesh and blood, but life will be restored to the Jewish nation as well. Ezekiel's dream brought hope to depressed people in bondage, who are grounded in God's incredible power displayed in dry bones that live again.

We 21st-century '*Followers of the Way*,' can also sometimes experience feeling like refugees in a foreign land. The church's place as the social center of the village has changed. The body of Christ no longer commands respect. It is easy to become discouraged with our faith having become dry. How marvelous it is to remember the gift of the Holy Spirit! What a difference being filled with, and led by, this Holy Power makes in our lives, in the church, and in the world.

Remembering the Day of Pentecost is like being re-charged all over again. St. Luke's description of the Day of Pentecost is like a Tsunami of wind, and an enormous blaze of fire shaped as tongues. And, as if this is not sufficient, there is the unforeseen ability to speak in other languages, that seem as fantastic and dream-like as Ezekiel's vision of new life for dry bones. Women and men, old and young (as the prophet Joel reminds us), will also dream dreams and proclaim God's truth, and display God's transforming power at work as it brings new life into the world.

And, of course, Joel and Ezekiel were not the last to see the Holy Spirit at work, or dream dreams, or prophesy. This change, this new way of seeing things, of living our lives, will be as visible as flame and wind.

"I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled." –D. L. Moody

The Rev'd Mark Lewis writes of a dream he once had. It was an outlandish dream that had an overwhelming effect on him. He said the dream was like an Antiques Roadshow of the soul. In his dream, he ponders all of the material things he owns, plus all of his personal achievements, and all the accomplishments that mean the most to him. At the end of this dream, he is told how little all of this stuff matters, but how much his faith and life mean to Jesus. Rev'd Lewis awakened with peace and joy.

As we journey toward our treasure, I encourage you to press on, not toward earthly treasures, things you possess, your accomplishments; rather, like St. Paul, you 'press on' toward those things that compel your soul and life, to sing joyfully of your new and ever-growing life in Jesus.

God can, and often does, use any experience to assist us in our commitment to and our growth in this new life. For example, many First Nations use the "Sweat Lodge" experience, to help people focus on what dreams and visions God will send to them.

Our need is for a fresh dedication to the Trinity. This will enable us to worship, serve; with out this will we be as dry as the dry bones. There are three ways to be on the journey toward fulfillment and these three are by faith.

The first is to surrender to God with your whole heart in every area of your life. The second is to live in the present, moment by moment obedience to the urging of the Holy Spirit which leads to a lifelong and deeper relationship with God and each other. The third is to tune our conscience toward Jesus. Read, study, and memorize God's Word that speaks of him.

This will generate a love-filled, Spirit-controlled, power-filled life that will produce glory to God and peace in your soul. And it is this that will attract seekers to the Christ in you. And all of this comes by faith. No earning. No negotiating. No begging. Simply trusting, pursuing God continually.

Immersing ourselves in Holy Scriptures, fasting, reading spiritual books, and prayer, are some of the spiritual practices that God may use to give you and I a prophecy, or a vision, or a dream that breaths new life into old, dry bones. These fresh encounters with God lead us to new and deeper gratitude for the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, helping us never to forget that God is always making all things new. Alleluia. Amen.