

What Do You See?

An Invitation to the Valley

Chapter 4

Speak to the Bones

If I am honest, this part of the story has always seemed strange. God asks Ezekiel if the bones can live. Ezekiel wisely responds, *“Lord God, You alone know.”* And then comes an unexpected instruction, God says: *“Prophesy to these bones.”* Talk to the bones, speak to the dry places; address the impossible situation, say something into the silence. At first glance, it almost seems absurd, after all, bones cannot hear, bones do not respond, bones do not listen, bones are dead, yet, God tells Ezekiel to speak anyway, and perhaps, that is exactly the point.

The Voices That Shape Us

Whether we realize it or not, our lives are constantly being shaped by voices, some come from family, some come from culture, some come from religion, some come from our own internal dialogue. Over time, those voices begin constructing the story we believe about ourselves:

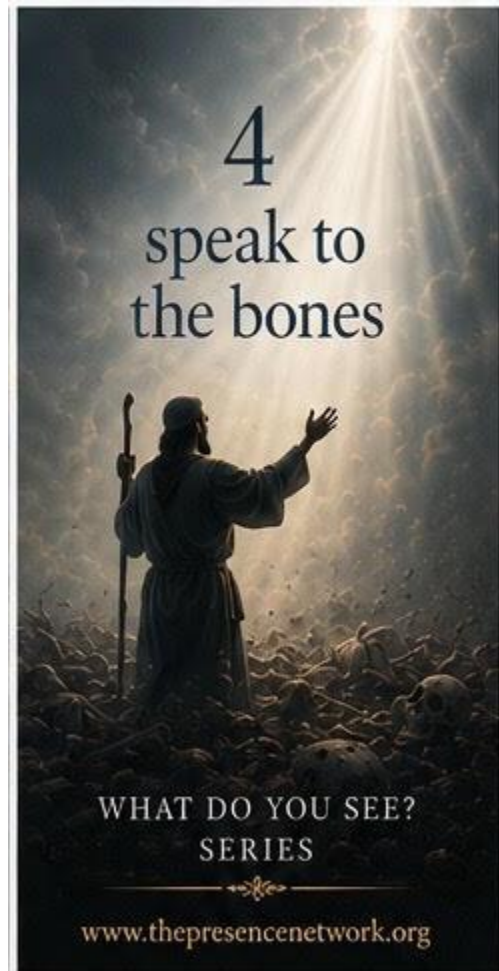
“You’ll never amount to anything.” “You’re too much.” “You’re not enough.” “You always fail.” “You ruined everything.” “Nobody really loves you.” “It’s too late.” “Nothing will ever change.” “You’re damaged.” “You’re broken.” “You’re alone.”

Many of these voices become so familiar that we stop questioning them, we simply assume they are true. Israel had been listening to those kinds of voices: The voice of defeat; the voice of shame; the voice of exile; the voice of despair, and eventually those voices became their reality. *“Our bones are dried up.” “Our hope is gone.” “We are cut off.”* Notice that before God restores their future, He interrupts their narrative, because healing often begins when a new voice enters the conversation.

The Language of Despair

Despair speaks fluently, it is persuasive, it sounds reasonable, it often appears logical.

Despair gathers evidence, it points to failures, it highlights disappointments, it catalogs losses, it remembers every setback, and because despair often uses real facts, it can be difficult to



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challenge. The bones were dry, that part was true. The exile was real, that part was true. The suffering was real, that part was true. The mistake comes when facts become conclusions.

The fact is: *The bones are dry.* **The conclusion becomes:** *Nothing can live again.*

The fact is: *The marriage is struggling.* **The conclusion becomes:** *It is hopeless.*

The fact is: *A child has become distant.* **The conclusion becomes:** *The relationship is over.*

The fact is: *I made mistakes.* **The conclusion becomes:** *I am a mistake.*

God is not challenging the facts; He is challenging the conclusions.

Speaking Truth Is Different Than Positive Thinking

Some people see and hear a chapter like this and immediately think of positive thinking, that is not what Ezekiel is doing. God does not ask Ezekiel to deny reality.

He does not say: *“Tell the bones they are healthy.”* He does not say: *“Pretend everything is fine.”* He does not say: *“Ignore the evidence.”* Instead, Ezekiel speaks what God says, that distinction matters.

Positive thinking often tries to create reality; divine, prophetic truth: reveals reality.

Positive thinking says: *“Everything is wonderful.”* Truth says: *“Things are difficult, but difficulty is not the end.”*

Positive thinking depends on circumstances; Truth depends on something deeper.

Positive thinking can collapse when circumstances worsen; truth remains even when the valley grows darker, the goal is not optimism, the goal is alignment with what God sees: a redemptive, eternal perspective.

What Are You Saying to Yourself?

This may be one of the most important questions in the entire book. What are you saying to yourself? Not what do you say publicly, not what do you post online, not what do you tell your friends. What are you saying when nobody else is listening? What is the narrative running quietly beneath your life? Many people spend years praying for transformation while rehearsing despair, they pray for healing, then spend the rest of the day declaring hopelessness. They pray for restoration, then repeat stories of defeat. They pray for peace, then continually feed anxiety, this is not condemnation, it is simply awareness. The voices we listen to eventually become the stories we believe; the stories we believe eventually become the lives we live.

The Bones Within Us

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Most of us have dry bones somewhere: a relationship, a dream, a ministry, a marriage, a friendship, a calling, a sense of purpose, a part of ourselves we quietly buried years ago. Some bones are visible, others are hidden. Some people know exactly where their valley is, others have become so accustomed to carrying it that they no longer notice, yet God continually invites us to bring those places into the light, not to shame us, not to expose us, but to restore us. Healing cannot occur in places we refuse to acknowledge. Transformation begins when honesty meets hope.

The Courage to Speak

Perhaps Ezekiel's greatest act of faith was not believing the bones would live, perhaps it was simply obeying. Ezekiel spoke before anything changed; he spoke before there was evidence; he spoke before there was movement; he spoke before there was proof. Most of us want evidence first, then action or obedience; God often reverses the order, not because He enjoys uncertainty, but because trust grows in places where certainty cannot survive. Ezekiel participates before he understands, and that participation becomes part of the miracle.

Reflection Questions

1. What messages do you most often repeat to yourself?
2. Which of those messages are rooted in fear, shame, or despair?
3. What conclusions have you drawn from difficult experiences?
4. Are those conclusions facts, or interpretations?
5. What truth might God be inviting you to speak into your own valley?

Journal Exercise

Complete the following statements:

- The message I most often repeat to myself is _____.
- This message came from _____.
- The evidence I use to support this belief is _____.
- What God may be saying instead is _____.
- One truth I need to remember this week is _____.

Presence Practice

Find a quiet place, take several slow breaths. Write down three negative statements you frequently tell yourself. Beside each one, write: *"Is this a fact, or a conclusion?"* Then ask: *"What truth might God speak into this situation?"* Do not rush; sit with the question: listen, reflect, allow a different voice to enter the conversation.

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Closing Meditation

The valley speaks. Fear speaks. Shame speaks. Trauma speaks. Loss speaks. Regret speaks. Despair speaks. The question is not whether voices exist, the question is which voice will shape your future. Ezekiel stood among dry bones and spoke not according to what he saw, but according to what God revealed, he did not deny reality, he simply refused to let reality become the final word... perhaps that is faith... not certainty, not control, not understanding.

We must simply allow God's voice to become louder than despair, because somewhere in every valley, a new story is waiting to be spoken, and sometimes the first movement of restoration begins with a single act of courage: **Speak to the bones.**

As we move into Chapter 5, something fascinating happens: Ezekiel speaks, but the bones don't immediately become a living army. First there is a rattling, then bones come together, then tendons, then flesh, then skin, yet still no breath. That's an incredibly important lesson: **healing often happens in stages.** Many people quit because they mistake partial progress for failure. Chapter 5 we explore how restoration often begins with small movements long before full transformation appears.